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# SPIRIT AND MUSIC

*By the same Author*

NERVE CONTROL

SELF TRAINING

A BOOK OF AUTO-  
SUGGESTIONS

THE INFLUENCE OF  
THOUGHT

A MANUAL OF  
HYPNOTISM

THE HIDDEN SELF

POINTS ON  
PRACTISING

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# SPIRIT AND MUSIC

**BY**

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# CONTENTS

CHAP.

- I THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC
  - II THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN LIFE
  - III THE EXPRESSION OF LIFE
  - IV SPIRIT A LIVING FACT
  - V THE CONDITIONS OF INSPIRATION
  - VI THE INTERPRETER
  - VII THE TEACHER
  - VIII THE SOUL OF SONG
  - IX MUSIC AND EDUCATION
  - X THE ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT
  - XI "PURE MUSIC"
  - XII THE PURPOSE OF ART
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# SPIRIT AND MUSIC

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC

“Art is the Manifestation of the Spiritual by means of the Material”  
*Newlandsmith*

Music is a part of life. It is not merely an accomplishment or a hobby, nor yet a means of relaxation from the strenuous business of earning a living. It is not an addendum or an excrescence: it is an actual part of the fabric of life itself. The object of these pages will be to show how closely Music, and indeed Art in general, has woven itself into the pattern of our lives, and how intimately it may influence and fashion the design.

The structural basis of Music is vibration. Sound comes to us in the guise of air-waves, which impinge upon the drum of the ear. The nerve-impulse thus aroused is conveyed to the brain, and there translated into sound. Strictly speaking there is thus no sound until the brain translates the message, while if the machinery of the ear be too dull to answer to the vibration the sound simply does not exist for us. Beyond doubt the world is full of sounds that we cannot hear and of sights that we never see, for of the whole range of vibration our senses permit us to garner but the veriest fragment—a few notes here of sound, and a brief range there of sight, out of the whole vast scale of vibrant Nature.

There are sounds which are musical, and others that are raucous and mere noise. The difference lies in the fact that harsh sounds are compounded of irregular vibrations, while the essence of Music is that its waves are rhythmic and follow each other in ordered swing. Rhythm is thus the primary manifestation of Music: but equally so it is the basic characteristic of everything in life. We learn that in Nature there is nothing still and inert, but that everything is in incessant motion. There is no such thing as solid matter. The man of Science resolved matter into atoms, and now these atoms themselves are found to be as miniature universes. Round a central sun, termed a Proton, whirl a number of electrons in rhythmic motion and incessant swing. And these electrons and protons—what are they? Something in the nature of charges of electricity, positive and negative. So where is now our seeming-solid matter?

When this knowledge informs our outlook we see that all that lives, moves: and even that which never seems to move, lives also in continual rhythm and response. The eternal hills are vibrant to the eye of science, and the very stones are pulsing with the joy of life. The countryside sings, and there is the beat of rhythm not merely in our hearts but in every particle of our body. Stillness is a delusion, and immobility a fiction of the senses. Life is movement and activity, and rigidity and stiffness come more near to what we understand as death. Yet even in death there is no stillness, there is but a change in the form of activity. The body is no longer alive as an organised community, but in its individual cells: the activity is the liveliness of decomposition. Thus all the world expresses life, and expresses it in a rhythm in which law and order reign supreme, and in which a sweet and sane regularity is the ordinance.

Regular rhythm involves accent. Whether or no there be any such emphasis as a thing in itself, the listening ear supplies it to meet a need. When we attend to a clock ticking, the tick-tock, tick-tock, however even it may sound at first, soon resolves itself into a rhythm with the accent on either the tick or the tock. So does the beat of an engine, or the hum of a railway train, merge itself into some definite sound picture, with the accent for relief that the ear demands. Thus out of rhythm grows very naturally an accentuation which gives balance, structure, and form. We start with the little units—the ticks and the tocks—and we build something bigger by grouping these together. This is a principle which we may see running through the activities of life in a thousand forms.

Bricks are made to pattern and thus possess a rhythm of their own, but when they are laid in courses they merge their individual rhythm into the ordered lines of the courses. These again may be comprehended in larger units of arches, buttresses, and stories: and all these again will be grouped and contained in this or that style of architecture. So, too, Music may begin with notes and tones, but accent quickly groups these into larger units to satisfy the senses in their demand for balance and proportion. Thus by increasing the size of our unit we build the rhythm of form and lay the foundation for the further development of the Art.

Since Nature is regular, from the beating of our own hearts to the swing of universes in the heavens, therefore engrained in our very selves is this claim for ordered progression, balance, and sustained sequence. When we attain this, whether in Music or otherwise, we



derive a measure of restfulness and satisfaction and we gain a sense of completeness. Any work of Art should leave us with this conviction, that nothing could be added or left out without marring the perfect proportion of the whole. "Jazz," whether in Music or in any other direction, gives just the very opposite effect, marring the sense of proportion and distorting the feeling of satisfaction. It exists as a testimony to a morbid dissatisfaction with life, it gives emphasis to the unbalanced and neurotic. The true beauty of Art—as of Music—consists on the contrary of this larger rhythm which makes for wholesomeness and proportion, which achieves at once the rest and the satisfaction that the soul craves. Its wholesomeness is health, which again is ease. Its reverse is disease: and when Music becomes mere noise and discord it is the same as when beauty becomes ugliness and health vanishes in sickness.

The second element of Music is melody, and this corresponds to the outline in Nature. Things have their shapes and their forms, even as our very lives consist of ups and downs, varied with occasional runs along the level. The country has its outlines, its hills that rise and climb, its valleys that fall and fade. There is the even line of the horizon, topped by the swelling clouds: there are curves and sweeps in the swaying of trees and grasses, in the flight of birds, and in the grace of the human form. It is significant that Nature's handiwork so abounds in curves, whilst that of man is fashioned so much upon straight lines with consequent sharp points and angles. Is it not obvious that Art has had but scanty share in designing our towns and manufactories? Right angles, no doubt, stand for utility in a commercial age, but Nature with her longer purview has little use for them and prefers a more rounded way of progress. Nature inspires, but not in square-cut periods. It is a safe plan to turn to Nature, as to the diagram of God, if we find ourselves in any doubt as to the way.

"Let your air be good, and your composition will be so likewise, and will assuredly delight," says tuneful Father Haydn, and Music's outline in melody limns, as does that of Nature, the beauty of her design. It speaks of wood or stream, of billowed sky, and now of sombre shadow. It ripples in dainty dance, or tumbles down in cascades of joy. Music's melody vies with the drive and bluster of the wind, sobbing and sighing, whistling round corners and playing pranks. Then, maybe, it sinks to silence, and the white mist creeps up: and now there is no melody, no outline, but just the one still sameness over all.

We live in a three dimensional world, and in its length, breadth, and solidity do we disport ourselves. Music also has its three-fold manner of expression, its rhythm, its melody, and now its harmony. The rhythm is for balance, the melody for the outline, while the harmony constitutes the texture. Here again in other directions we may trace the same essentials: there is a texture of colouring, a style in Literature, and an appropriate technique for harmony in every branch of Art, just as there is an harmonic scheme in Music. This may be airy, light, and gossamer, or turgid and obscure: it may be commonplace or ponderous. Like Nature, it may have a thousand or a myriad shades to mirror as many moods and tenses. It may have the misty filminess of steam, the limpid deeps of water, or the cold weight and icy dullness of pompous ignorance.

See how Nature harmoniously groups her colour scheme, with a master hand ensuring that nothing shall clash or be inappropriate. Into this scheme she introduces the song of birds and the sighing of the breeze, with perhaps in the dull distance the roar of the sea growling away and refusing to be driven from its obstinate pedal bass. Into our life she brings affection rose-colour, and for openness and truth the blue of the sky. She paints hatred dark, and passion fiery. Energy she portrays as red, and purity white. Could we but see ourselves in this colour-scheme we should realise that, like God's fresh air, all should be clear and bright, but we ourselves pollute the design with the smoke of our own desires.

So the musician to-day takes the theme that has been given to him by the high gods, for "the idea in embryo comes from a Higher Power"<sup>[1]</sup> and paints in and accompanies it with such harmonies as his soul may sound and his technique record. He has Nature for pattern, and he may do what he will so long as, Nature-like, there is life expressing itself. Everything in the world stands for something, as even the hills stand for pulsing life. As within, so without: the outer semblance is never the real thing, but ever stands as a mirror to the inner. The bird sings, but he is ever expressing his soul in song: it is only the human singer who can utter sounds without significance. Music is never mere notes, never sound alone, but always the outer form as the expression and unfoldment of something deeper. Rhythm, melody, and harmony are simply the three-fold means of expression, both of the musician and of Mother Nature. Of the two, Nature makes the better Music, being closer to the heart of God.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN LIFE

“Music is not merely a matter for the cultured: it is inextricably bound up in the bundle of common life”

*Scholes*

Music, as we have seen, is implanted in the very nature of things, and it is as deeply embedded in our lives. Was there ever a time when no man sang? As a matter of evolutionary accuracy, yes, there probably was such a time. But, looking at it in a commonsense way the answer is No. To-day we find that savages and aborigines, who are still in the childhood stage of evolution, are immensely susceptible to the sway of rhythm, and in their weird dances to the beating of the Tom-toms accompany their antics with a crooning or chanting, which no doubt to them stands in the place of song.

Was there ever a mother who did not croon to her fretful child, and who did not rock her babe to sleep with rhythmic lullaby? Song spans the gap from mother Eve to the mother of to-day: the song may vary, though the emotion of the mother-love remains the same. This crooning, with its element of soothing monotony, it is interesting to note is distinctly hypnotic in its effect, for the sleep of hypnosis is definitely induced by monotonous stimulation of any of the senses. The rocking and crooning on the part of the mother are quite akin, though unconsciously so, to the approved scientific methods. It is also curious that the nature of the monotonous stimulation does not seem to matter very much, for there is a case on record where a doctor hypnotised a patient by reciting to him in a low voice a few verses of “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” The psycho-analysts would probably say that the patient went to sleep in self-defence. We can well remember how we were lulled to sleep in earliest days to the following somewhat fearsome and original words sung to the tune of a popular hymn:—

“Bye, bye, bye, bye,  
Horse, pig, cow, sheep,  
Rhinoceros, donkey, cat:  
Dog, dickie, hippopotamus,  
Black-beetle, spider, rat.”

From which it appears evident that the actual words used as a soporific allow considerable latitude of choice.

No doubt Pan piped, and the Nymphs danced to his music in their woodland groves, much as the poor kiddies in the slums and alleys of our smoke-ridden towns dance to-day when the Italian organ man comes round with his instrument. The melody and rhythm float out and call to the music lying hid in their hearts, and their self responds. Something within them demands instant expression, and they forget their slums in dancing their merry measure, till the music stops and the Italian passes on to raise Fairyland in the next slum. Music has given them a glimpse of something outside their dull and prosaic surroundings, it has touched their hearts with a glamour which is a glint of spiritual sunshine in a drab world.

It was our privilege a dozen years or more ago to have a small share in the active work of the Art Studies Association of Liverpool. This organisation, due to the zeal of the Director of Education, existed for the purpose of introducing the joys of Music to the children of the various elementary schools. Concerts of different types were given for their benefit in their own schoolrooms in the evenings, and as admittance could not be given to all it was considered a privilege to be able to attend. The pathos stills echoes in mind when we recall how some of these children, boys and girls, would trudge out in the wet evenings, often ill-nourished and insufficiently clad, to taste the joys of music. Never was there any question of attention, for they were eagerness personified, and it seemed as if they found there something that their souls had missed. Too little do we realise that food and clothing do not suffice us, young or old. We cannot live by bread alone: our stomachs may be full and our souls empty. The spiritual side of our nature demands sustenance and, as in the case of these hungry and often wet little school children, it is the province of Music to minister to that need. "A love of music is worth any amount of five-finger exercises, and the capacity to enjoy a Symphony is beyond all examination certificates."<sup>[2]</sup>

A brass band will fill a whole street with glamour, and the normal person finds it quite impossible to be out of step with the rhythm of the march. Watch the way in which, as the Pied Piper of Hamelin drew the children after him, the band draws the elders to the window and the children to the street: the appeal is never in vain. Marching in time with the music tired feet forget their weariness, and new strength comes from the reserves of the greater self, liberated at the

unspoken appeal of melody and rhythm. The Salvation Army with its sometimes quite excellent brass bands ever attracts a crowd of interested listeners. Their enthusiasm is quite as real as, and perhaps even more real than, that of a fashionable audience in the Queen's Hall: more real, because if the Salvation Army fails to please it is always possible to walk away. If a person is bored at the Queen's Hall a lack of moral courage will probably detain him to the end of the performance. There is magic in a bugle call, there are whole volumes of countryside history in a posthorn's blast as the four-horse coach swings past. The beat of the drum and the shrill pipe of the fifes carry a "come-along" atmosphere with them, and if we fail to answer the call it is most likely with a lingering feeling of regret that the days of adventure for us are past and gone.

All this is the incidental music of the highways and byways, but as a perennial stimulant for the emotions we call for Music's aid in many circumstances. Does not the villain of the piece enter and take the stage to a suggestively diabolic tremolo in the orchestra, and is not the lovemaking also conducted to an appropriately sensuous accompaniment, sufficiently subdued, to keep the emotions susceptible and fluid? Could the villain enter with the same *éclat* to a stony silence, or the lovemaking thrill in the same way without the moral support of a few well-chosen harmonies? It may be that in heightening the emotional element we correspondingly diminish the appeal to the intelligence, and thus render ourselves less critical both of stage-villainy and of fictitious lovemaking.

Nothing can be accomplished without music of some sort. We must have it in our churches and our chapels, in our moving pictures, in schools, at banquets and dinners, and in the restaurants. Could any bride feel the same satisfaction in walking down the silent aisle of the church, after the most important ceremony in the world, as if the organ were pealing out its good wishes in Mendelssohn's Wedding March? Oh NO. Music we must have, for it has wedded itself to all our pomp and ceremony, and if we may not have it in any other guise we must at least end up with "Auld Lang Syne" or "For he's a jolly good fe-e-ellow," or at any rate the National Anthem.

In the robust and plain-speaking days of old Pepys our forbears took their Musick seriously. There was less of the gadding about that fills the time to-day, and much of the melody was perforce home-made. Any educated person was expected to be able to take his part in a glee at sight, and some of the music was none too easy at that. The

contrast with the present lamentable lack of sight-reading ability is most marked. The number of people who could do the same to-day is, in comparison, small. We have not made progress in this direction, indeed we have fallen back. But we have multiplied our choirs and our choral societies, our Musical Festivals with their competitions have taken solid root, training in musical work is now more widespread than ever before, and these considerations have served, and are serving, to make music more and more a part of the national life.

Sometimes indeed we happen upon music in unexpected quarters. One of the most impressive scenes that comes to mind is an occasion during the Great War—in which music played so valiant a part in sustaining the morale of combatants and non-combatants alike—when, drawn up on the departure platform of a Metropolitan railway station, in full kit and in two long ranks, was a number of Welsh Guards. They were singing some song in two parts, and while the one half sustained the melody the others were rolling out a fine contrapuntal accompaniment with full, resonant, and sonorous tone. The effect was quite remarkable. Song heartens us when weary and helps the miles to slip past even though the ditty be but “Tipperary” or “John Brown’s body.” In the emergency someone will strike up a ditty or a hymn and at once the human spirit and Will revive their native courage: did not the Titanic sink to the strains of the hymn “Lead, kindly Light,” sung by a group of those who were facing death, and faced it with song upon their lips?

We have music in our heritage, we have Folk Songs by land and Chanties that smack of the seas: in these there lies a wealth of melody and sentiment of which we have made too little. But it is entirely charming to see the way in which small children in the schools will sing these songs with complete natural verve and appreciation. “Oh, no John, no John, No” will be rendered with that Art which only springs from artlessness. Surely it is to the young that we must look if the love of music is to be fostered and encouraged in the coming years. “Let the rising generation become thoroughly well acquainted with the best Musical works through the medium of concert-lectures, the mechanical piano-player, municipal, hotel, and garden concerts. Let them follow up their knowledge with reading about Musicians’ lives, work, and influence. Throughout all this instruction—and from the very first—let them become acquainted with the elements of musical theory, both in their minds and also as exemplified on the pianoforte keyboard: and when all this has been

done we shall have a cultivated musical public—a public that is able to discriminate between the good and the bad, the true and the false art.”<sup>[3]</sup> This may perhaps be the counsel of perfection of an enthusiast, but progress lies more along the lines of appreciation of music than in the personal performance of it. There are thousands who are able to appreciate the technical mastery of an instrument to every one who can accomplish it. Music as taught at present in the non-elementary schools is largely a snare and a delusion. A few are turned out with a musicianly equipment, largely in spite of the system rather than by its aid, but the vast majority have little more than a smattering of musical knowledge and a mediocre standard of executive ability as the result of years of study. But the growth of the artistic soul is not accomplished through the fingers, and indeed it is not infrequently strangled at birth by five-finger exercises.

Yet we are waking up. Music already occupies an unassailable position in our daily activities, it will presently occupy a still greater place. Nothing is still, and least of all does Art remain fixed. The whole world is awakening to a new standard of values, for we have at length discovered the impossibility of running civilisation on purely materialistic lines. The inner side of things is becoming manifest, and a measure of spiritual insight is being vouchsafed to us: therefore all those things which minister to the spiritual will be increased in our regard. Of these Music is certainly not the least. “Religion, love, and Music, are they not the three-fold expression of the same fact, the need of expansion under which every noble soul labours?”<sup>[4]</sup> So the Art of the future may be expected to ally itself with religion, on the side of spirit, for the battle royal against the forces of an outworn materialism. The end is not by any means yet, but the issue is certain: and we ourselves to-day may play the more valiant part in the moulding of the years to be if we realise to the full, not only what Music is and the part it plays in life, but also the fine possibilities that lie hidden in the future.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE EXPRESSION OF LIFE

“Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life”  
*Beethoven*

If Music be a means of expression, we must needs ask ourselves what it expresses. It is entirely insufficient to accept music as sequence or a combination of tones that “sound nice.” It would be just as reasonable to regard a meal as something that tastes nice, whereas of course the meal has a meaning and a use beyond mere taste: its purpose is to sustain life, and the question of taste is merely incidental to the larger issue. Music therefore may sound nice, but we desire to arrive at some explanation far transcending this.

All phases of life express something, and we shall not be very far from the truth if we regard that something as spirit. The grass, we say, is alive: but its life consists in its ability to express that essential something which we here term spirit. When it is no longer able to accomplish this, the grass is still there, but we call it dead. We might draw an apt parallel from the electric light bulb: this is nothing but a possible source of light, until it is connected with the main supply from the generating station. The seeming independence of the bulb is a fiction, it has no true existence as a lamp until it expresses itself by giving light. Yet the light is not its own light, and when the filament breaks and the current can no longer circulate through the bulb it ceases to be a lamp. It is, like the grass, dead: and for exactly the same reason, that it can no longer express life or spirit.

Furthermore, the amount of resistance that a lamp interposes to the free circulation of the current through it has its effect upon the light it gives. One lamp may yield a fine light, and another on the same circuit may afford but poor illumination: the one expresses well, and the other ill. So, too, with the grass, one patch may be free-growing and another may be but poor stuff: one expresses well, and the other feebly. In the same way with ourselves, if our bodies have the life force circulating freely they express robust health: and if the force find but a constricted channel, then our bodies express health in scanty measure and approximate more to disease than to the normal well-being. Our bodies are no more independent organisms than is the lamp bulb: they express the spirit which is the essence of the self,



and when that self withdraws the body is as dead as the grass or the worn-out bulb. Yet the failure of the bulb casts no reflection upon the generating station, for the current is still there. We do not need to assume that the current has failed, for in that case it would fail alike for every bulb upon the circuit. If every form and phase of life were to expire and cease at a given moment, we might then, and then only, be justified in assuming that spirit had ceased to be: but in that case there would be but little need for us to worry about the point.

We may imagine spirit as the driving force behind everything, as the urge towards evolution, as the pent-up intelligence which ever seeks one variation and then another. Then, when one variation appears, more appropriate to its surroundings than others, this, because of its fitness, survives. As human beings we are individualised fragments of the great universal spirit. There is only the one life and the one spirit, but there are diversities of gifts to enable that spirit to be expressed. The grass expresses it in its luxuriance, its colour, and its growth: the birds in their song: and the whole of what we are pleased to term the lower creation bespeaks this spirit in the daily activity. When this expression ceases, the thing that was once alive is dead.

There is no special merit that all the works of the Lord should thus praise the Lord in their expression, because below the stage of a human being there is no option. The lower forms of life are like lamps on a circuit which light up by reason of the current over which they exercised no control. But a human being is like a lamp that is connected with the main circuit and yet has its own switch. This ability to switch on or off constitutes our measure of freewill, our power of saying yes or no. It is a necessary accompaniment of our knowledge of good and evil for “no choice, no progress.” It betokens our progress from the merely animal stage of consciousness to that of self-consciousness—the phase of existence where we not only know, but we know that we know. This ability to express well, badly, or not at all, just as we may please, is our special prerogative: it gives man the privilege, which is denied to all life below him, of deliberately choosing the worse and of making a fool of himself. The animals know what is good for them because they follow their unreasoning instincts and blindly repeat the racial course of action implanted within them, and the mere survival of the species proves that this particular response to the particular circumstance has been “tried out” by ages of experience. But a man blinds and smothers his instincts (and these at the best, it may be observed, are distinctly mixed) or

perhaps indulges them in defiance of his better judgment, and thus his expression of his own divinity is often sadly marred.<sup>[5]</sup>

“Know this, O man, sole root of sin in thee  
Is not to know thine own divinity.”

A man may even deny the very existence of spirit, and thus by a subtle but efficacious species of self-suggestion prevent its manifestation in himself. But whether he expresses this spirit well or ill, a man does in fact join with all creation below him in manifesting this innate spirituality without which there can be no life.

Thus everything stands for something else that is deeper, there is an outer form and an inner soul or spirit. Spenser thus expresses it:—

“For of the soule the bodie forme doth take,  
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie  
make.”

It is only when we grasp this elementary truth that life becomes in the least plain and intelligible, and the result of grasping it is that we cease to be deceived by the apparent values of things, and are able to appraise them more at their true and spiritual worth. We are then enabled to pass from circumstances (which are results) to the realm of causes: the balance is transferred from the seen to the unseen, and the point of view approximates more to the eternal than the transient. A greater poise and certainty follow as a matter of course, since the mental outlook is centred in the true rather than the seeming.

All life then is the expression of spirit, and our varied activities are but the modes of this expression. To this, Music is no exception. Very naturally also, the better the machinery or the technique of expression, the more of the spirit can get through. We can play more sympathetically, more fluently, and with finer effect on a beautiful “grand” than on a jangly upright instrument: the one is a better vehicle of expression than the other. So also we can secure more fluent expression with a fountain pen than with one that continually interrupts the free flow of ideas by demanding to be dipped in the inkpot. We have two typewriters of the same manufacture, but one is an early model and the other a modern machine: there is a vast difference in the ease of expressing thought, in the favour of the later instrument with all its special conveniences. In general terms the object of all improvement of technical means is the better expression of the spirit. Musically, to practise scales and exercises with the object of getting one’s fingers loose is like eating for the sake of

developing a fluent jaw action—the vision of the end has been lost in the means. We must ever keep in view the fact that life itself, and especially Art and Music, can only fulfil a proper purpose when resulting in the ever-increasing and better expression of the underlying spirit, or as Elgar puts it—“more of Truth.”

The law of spirit is Love. The drive of spirit is ever upward towards progress, aspiration, and unity. If we take a drop of quicksilver and separate it into smaller particles, as soon as ever the conditions allow, these smaller globules will amalgamate themselves with the larger body from which they have been temporarily divorced. We can almost imagine we hear them utter a fervent “thank goodness” as they reach that home of heart’s desire. So are we, too, as separated and individualised sparks of the divine fire, burning till at length we reach our freedom and can merge ourselves in that Sun of spirit whence, “trailing clouds of glory,” we have come.

Man, we say, is a gregarious animal, and it is certainly only the man of warped mind who seeks to cut himself off from his fellows: we are all of us spirits, and spirit seeks unity and approach. Love is the one uniting and binding force in the universe, just as its opposite—hatred—is the disintegrating element. Love operates in attraction, as we see it in motherhood, childhood, and the love of man and maid. But it also works on the grand scale in the guise of the law of Gravity which attracts and binds universes together, and regulates and controls the swing of inconceivable immensities. Look again and we may see love working as chemical affinity to attract molecule to molecule, or as cohesion to keep the very particles knit together in kinship.

It is this spirit of love that unites the myriad cells of our own body into the little commonwealth of self: when this life-force withdraws, the love ceases to bind, and immediately the “dead” body becomes infinitely alive, but the unity is at an end and decomposition has set in. So love is the fulfilling of the law: not merely “a” law, but the very fundamental law on which our continued existence hangs. Eliminate gravity, and the universe as we know it must come to an end in a catastrophe which it is beyond the power of our imagination to conceive. If cohesion ceased to be, then everything would fall to powder and would disintegrate. Destroy all love between man and man, and civilisation itself would fall to pieces. This is no question of dogma, gospel, or man-made law, it is simply a plain statement of the fundamental condition of our very existence. The importance of love

is paramount, and if we are wise we shall seek to discover these overriding laws of our being, and adjust our lives in conformity with their requirements.

Spirit is love, and love manifests itself in service: the love that seeks its own ends, or strives to get instead of to serve, is no love at all. Therefore if Music is to express this spirit it must do so by contributing its meed of assistance to make this workaday world more bright by gladdening the heart of man. Quite obviously much of the music that is written has been composed with no such intent, therefore and to that extent it stultifies itself. It must be classed as the “sounding brass and tinkling cymbal” of the prophet. St. Paul’s analysis of the reason of the ineffectiveness of such, too, is searchingly accurate: that, lacking charity, it signified nothing. Charity is only another synonym for that love which is the manifestation of spirit. The true musician has this spirit of love within him and it demands expression, and so we find Mozart exclaiming “I write because I cannot help it.” So Granville Bantock, too—“The impulse to create Music is on me, and I write to gratify my impulse. When I have written the work I have done with it. What I do desire is to begin to enjoy myself by writing something else.”<sup>[6]</sup> The musician sings because he must: he writes so that the spirit may find its outlet in that direction: or he plays, when only through his fingers and the instrument can he find that expression which his soul demands.

When Music is thus outpoured it speaks of spirit, and adds to the spiritual store of the world. It reinforces the unseen hosts that fight for spirit in the age-long struggle with the powers of materialism and darkness. No breath of spirit is ever lost, and nothing devoid of it is ever permanent, either in music or in anything else. Sounds without sense or meaning are futile, notes without a heartfelt message are “returned empty” as they were sent forth, and practice without purpose other than mere self-gratification, agility, or display, is a magnificent and glorious waste of time. But Music, when its true underlying purport is discovered, is at once an inspiration and a most real means of achieving that fundamental object, for which our very existence here at this present moment is devised, namely spiritual growth and development.

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## CHAPTER IV

### SPIRIT A LIVING FACT

“Is Music the inarticulate  
Speech of the Angels on earth?  
Or a voice of the Undiscovered  
Bringing great truths to the birth?”

*F. W. Faber*

Life is a diversity in unity, and the expression in countless different forms and shapes of the one fundamental reality, spirit. We ourselves are comprehended in this definition, being part of this fundamental spirit, and claiming thereby our divinity. Music also, as a part of life, is subject to the same explanation: and thus the spirit of Music is a real thing. The Muses of a Classical day typified this same idea of the spirit behind the form. Indeed man, spiritual as at base he is, can never rest finally satisfied with the outer semblance and form: just as the body craves sustenance, so does the spiritual part of him. No amount of physical satisfaction will ever allay the heart-hunger, and no flood of Rationalist thinking will ever put an end to the instinctive search after the Unknown God.

In spiritual law, as in natural law, nothing is ever lost. We study the physical, and by analogy we may learn much of the spiritual: we have not been left without guidance in the maze of life. But the first essential is that we should study those things which are open to us, and through them learn something of the wisdom that otherwise lies hidden. Nothing is lost: we see, as the hymn puts it, “change and decay,” but the decay is only change of form, and death, in the form of extinction, simply does not exist. Even thoughts, transient and gossamer as they may appear, do their work in our brains and leave their permanent impress with us. Occultists further assure us that they are recorded in the eternal archives. It is said that there are the Akashic Records, in some subtle way which we cannot pretend to understand, imprinted in the ether. “This primary substance is of exquisite fineness and is so sensitive that the slightest vibration... registers an indelible impression upon it.”<sup>[7]</sup> If this be so, then here is the story of all that has ever been, and all that is. In our own subconscious minds we know full well that there is such a perfect and complete record as to constitute an individual Judgment Book within of unimpeachable accuracy, and there seems to be nothing

intrinsically unreasonable in the idea that there should be something of the kind on a world scale. Monumental histories of the traditional lost continent of Atlantis have been compiled, professedly from this source, and we find an interesting inkling of the same idea in the way in which objects will sometimes impress sensitive folk with their own history. Things sometimes have a “feel” about them, pleasant or the reverse, just as buildings acquire an aura and an atmosphere, sacred or convivial, or even unholy.

The musician, then, may obey Nature’s universal behest, and change his form from the physical of to-day to the more tenuous of a finer realm. He may die: but his music lives on. He perhaps has played his part in the world symphony and, his present work finished, he lays his instrument aside. This body of ours is the instrument of the spirit: no wedding feast without a wedding garment, and no part or lot in the physical world without a body. The tuning of the body to delicate response and high endeavour enables the spirit to express its melody the better, and therefore it is incumbent upon the musician to cultivate a high standard of physical health. This does not mean the maximum of nourishment, combined with stimulants to compel a jaded appetite: on the contrary, artistic efficiency demands super-cleanliness and a tolerably rigid self-denial. Girth is no measure of artistic ability. But the body, sound or otherwise, is the instrument through which we play life’s little tune, just as the pianist plays through his pianoforte. But when we have closed the pianoforte nobody supposes that we have extinguished the artist, or annihilated the music: we have merely put an end to its expression for the time. So when our instrument of the body grows old, worn-out, or decrepit, so that it can no longer answer to the dictates of the spirit within, we cast it aside, as an instrument whose keys are broken, or whose strings are for ever mute. Then the musician goes upon his far journey.

But long though the journey seem, it is a change of state rather than of place: as if from being cased in solid ice he now were buoyant in limpid water. His music and his melodies which were so great a part of him now constitute his real self, besides being for ever inscribed upon the roll of eternal remembrance. So the great musicians still live on, and when we claim that such-and-such an interpreter gives us the spirit of Bach, we may be saying more truly than we realise. There is no limit to the range of thought save the intrinsic nature of the thought itself. All thoughts seek their own, by the law of sympathy: like to like, fine to fine, and gross to gross. “Not all of us give due

credit to the anomalous nature of love, reaching as high as heaven, sinking as low as hell, uniting in itself all extremes of good and evil, of lofty and low.”<sup>[8]</sup> So when a man steepes himself in thoughts of a type, when he ponders over and lives in the music of a master, his thoughts span the realms and the ages, and he reaches that master, even if only to touch the hem of his garment. Then the master’s thoughts are his, and he truly gives of the spirit of the music, for a measure of inspiration has been vouchsafed to him.

Whatever we dwell upon has its “tuning” effect upon our thoughts, and thus we reach some of the lore and wisdom of those who have trodden the way before us. The inventor and the discoverer are truly what the words imply: the inventor “comes upon” the new idea or principle, and the discoverer “uncovers” and makes plain. But all the ideas and all the new and novel discoveries, and all the laws, were there before: we only reach them when we have climbed to a sufficient height to be able to apprehend them. So the musician who reaches the spirit of Bach has, by the attunement of his thoughts and his aspirations, crept into the heart of the music and has tugged at the musician’s heart-strings. He has touched the composer’s soul, and henceforth he plays Music, not notes.

Again, Bach, and all the masters of Music have in their turn but discovered the Music that was already there. No man really creates, any more than the gardener creates an oak tree by the planting of an acorn. The gardener provides the necessary conditions in which the oak, already miraculously pent within the acorn, can unfold and develop. So the musician also provides the necessary conditions in which the spirit of Music can blossom and bear fruit. He need take to himself no vast amount of credit, for he is but a trustee of that which has been lent to him: he neither creates it nor owns it. His music is a gift of spirit, and when by his life’s work he has glorified that gift, then henceforth that is his contribution to the universal store of spirit, and his Art belongs to the ages.

Inspiration is a commonplace of life, though only too often we think of it solely in connection with religion, and especially with reference to the Bible. Because thought flies free and ever consorts like with like, so almost every moment of our days we are inspiring others and being inspired in return. It is mere delusion that we consider ourselves independent units, for we are literally built of one another. Memory largely constitutes the man, for his every experience and thought is recorded by his subconscious memory, and goes to the

making of his characteristics and his personality. Day by day we meet, and perforce remember each other: we remember also those to whom we may never have spoken, and so—unintroduced—they creep in this subtle way into our personality. “We are, each one of us, united by bonds of emotional influence with the personalities of all those with whom we have had to do. If we could see them, they would guide us to their objects, for they never lose their way. Thus by threads of love, threads of hatred, threads of adoration, threads of thought, the universe of souls is interpenetrated and linked up into a unity of correlated activity, an intricate web of life.”<sup>[9]</sup> Something of myself goes, in my thoughts, into this written word: you read it, and as the thought incorporates itself in your mind so does some tenuous element of my personality creep into your own. Our independence is a fiction. We inspire each other, whether we like it or no.

But inspiration is of all kinds: it is like those neutral forces of faith and thought, which depend for their result upon the direction in which they are turned. Inspiration can uplift, but it may also degrade. We ourselves by the tuning of our own thoughts determine which it shall accomplish. Like can only answer to like: anger can never play echo to love, for their vibrations are so far apart in attunement that the one cannot influence the other. But anger answers to anger, and love to love. It is the eternal response of the love implanted in the spirit of man that ever bids him answer to the love that radiates from the divine. Hence, in whatever age or clime we look, always there is to be seen man in quest for the unseen, after joy, beauty, truth, happiness, after all those spangles that glitter on the garment of love.

The mind of man is ever the tenuous instrument upon which are playing the invisible forces of inspiration. All the thoughts that have existed, exist still: all the thoughts that man can ever think are there already, they do but await the time and season in which he can sense and interpret them. These are the future discoveries for you and for me. The pioneers who have passed our way are still working at the tasks that were at once their life and love: and they have not gone so far upon the journey that they have outspanned the reach of thought. If our thoughts be fine and unselfish enough, if aspiration tune them sufficiently high, they will reach their aim: and the reply will be vouchsafed. There was never yet an aspirant who was unable to find a teacher. It is most true that the living and the dead are still one family, for of course there are no “dead,” unless we most correctly put into this category the dull of hearing, the dull of heart, and the loveless who still walk this earth. But if we deem the pioneers



defunct and inarticulate, then it is little likely that we shall comprehend the reality and the naturalness of this interplay and inspiration. If we never seek, information and insight will scarcely drop upon us from the skies.

We talk of inspired playing, inspired teaching, the gift of song, and so on, and we talk of a reality. The playing that is not inspired is worth but little, it has the worth of a nutshell with the kernel gone amissing. It is sound, perhaps it may even be fine sound, yet it signifies nothing: it is as the painted face aping true beauty. Art without inspiration is our electric light bulb disconnected from the main current. There are prophets in the world to-day, for a prophet in the strict sense of the word is one who speaks forth his message. Everyone who senses something of the eternal message—which is love—is in his degree a prophet, yea and a saviour too. He may speak or sing, he may perform or compose, he may wait and serve, or he may just pass his message on with a handshake and a smile: he is an interpreter, a medium twixt wisdom and the unwise. Thus we must place the true artist, whatever be the particular bent of his activities, as a prophet in his day and his generation. That he may be far from being regarded as such by those to whom he ministers is merely one of the incidental disadvantages of being a prophet.

Quite obviously also there will be both good prophets and bad: even a prosaic telegram may be repeated on payment of half the original cost, because of the possibility of error occurring in the text. How much more may error occur, then, when tenuous messages are being sent from high sources by the power of thought, and when the receiving instrument is so often imperfect, so frequently out of gear, and when that instrument in addition is more than a trifle wilful and tainted with selfishness. Inspiration is ever ready, it floats around us like tuned wireless vibrations waiting to be picked up by a sympathetic receiver. Yet so few receivers, being but human after all, are sensitive enough and sufficiently delicate in in their poise to catch the floating news: and so the harvest is plenteous but those who garner it are few.

Perhaps Sullivan felt something of this when, in the “Prodigal Son,” he penned the simplest and yet most eloquent of melodies to the words, “O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments,” ending up with the words, set too simply for any but a consummate artist to sing with complete effect,—“Turn ye, turn ye—why will ye die?” The marvel truly is that we are already so dead, so immured and

petrified in our hard self-satisfaction, when we might so easily develop the freedom, fluidity, and delicacy of fine response to these tenuous intimations of our own spirituality and high destiny. Here we live, as some writer has aptly said, on top of a gold mine, and the tragedy is that we are ignorant of the gold. We live, and move, and have our being in an ocean of spiritual and inspiring thought: surely our problem is to find the conditions that will avail to put us in touch with this lively world of inspiration in which we are accustomed to pass so dead and unresponsive an existence.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE CONDITIONS OF INSPIRATION

“The greatest Masterpieces in Music will be found to contain sensuous, emotional, and rational factors, and something beside: some divine element of life by which they are animated and inspired”

*W. H. Hadow*

It may be interesting for a little space to consider the conditions under which Inspiration operates, for, like any other faculty, it is subject to the control of law. We have already emphasised the universality of vibration and the call of like to like, but the theme will bear some further elaboration.

We adventure into the study of sound and its laws and we find that all sounds are propagated by means of waves. These proceed in circular fashion, as do the ripples upon the still surface of a lake into which a stone has been thrown. Further, these waves are of differing rates. Middle C, on the piano, for instance, is made by waves that reach us at the rate of about 256 per second. As sound travels roughly at 1,100 feet to the second, it is clear that the wave of this note is something over four feet from crest to crest. The wave of a note an octave higher would be double the rate and half the length. In addition to this there may be big waves and little waves travelling at the same rate, and also the actual shape of the waves may differ very widely. Thus waves have points of similarity and yet their infinite variety, as do human beings.

This variety in the shape of the waves results in the difference in timbre between various tones. Nobody could fail to distinguish between the sound of a note played on a penny whistle and the same note given out on a violin or a cornet: yet the actual rate of wave would be the same in each case. The reason is that no tone is a pure fundamental tone, there are always super-added a number of other tones, termed the overtones. These are, to the original tone, exactly what the flavouring is to the pudding. You have your fundamental tone and you can add your overtones to taste: you can flavour with the penny whistle, the violin, or the cornet timbre to suit yourself. But according to the flavouring, so is the shape of the wave. Isolated fundamental tones are apt to be colourless and monotonous, like the diapason work on an organ. The organist is able to flavour his

fundamental tone at will, by the stops he draws to add to it: he has a special supply of “mixtures” which sound truly dreadful and impossible by themselves, but these in combination with the fundamental go to the making of a successful timbre. Carrots, by themselves, are not a Christmas diet, but we understand that they go to improve the flavour of the festive pudding.

In some such way as this thoughts are tuned, and from the thoughts we think, the desires we entertain, and the aspirations which fill our souls, the timbre of our life is determined. No one is fundamentally and wholly good or bad, we have all of us our overtones, and some of us have very curious mixtures which go to make us what we are. But just as the gramophone will take in all the wonderful complexity of sound waves which are sent out by a whole orchestra of instruments, and will combine these into one wavy line on the record—a kind of compound wave containing “all the elements so mixed”—so also it is with ourselves. All the thought elements are so mixed in us that as we go through life we vibrate to a note that is unique, compounded as it is of all those inner thoughts and emotions that are so exclusively our own. To those who sound the same note, or one that is in harmony, we are akin. We meet them for the first time, and in a moment we have known them for years, perhaps always: we play unison or harmony in our sympathetic attunement. On the other hand, sounding our persistent middle C on our little journey, perhaps we come up against an equally insistent C sharp: excellent notes, each of them—yet there promises but doubtful harmony. Keep to your own key, and be happy.

Whatever note we sing is an invisible, and yet most potent, influence in our lives. We may deem that our thoughts do not matter overmuch, and that it is only deeds that count. Heresy and mistake. Thoughts make us or mar us. Sympathy ensures that we are surrounded and encompassed by that which we ourselves attract. There is a law of consonance, and we are responsible for things in a way that but few realise. This note we sing, this mirror of our personality, this invisible force attracts our friends: change the note—the personality—and we inevitably alter the friendships which were determined thereby. This same note selects the clothes we wear, the things we eat, it chooses the books we read and the avocations we pursue. It is reflected in the pictures on our walls, and in the furniture which decorates our rooms. It determines the prospects which are before us, just as it has attracted the appropriate difficulties and trials that we have left behind. It marries us, and eventually it buries us.

Sometimes our overtones of desires or greed enter us long before our lease of life is due to expire. But perhaps most important of all, it determines and selects the Inspiration we are able to receive.

Thoughts of every kind beat upon our minds, as the waves lap the seashore, but we are only able to respond to those that call and awaken some sympathetic answer within us. The heart that is pure can live in an ocean of impurity, and yet remain unsullied: but the character with anger implanted within will find that anger blazing out in echo and answer to a hundred provocations a day. Hatred means nothing, in temptation or response, to a heart overflowing with love. Thus this attunement is at once an avenue for our assault, or our sure shield of defence, according as its note determines. A low tone is an ever-present danger, and a high one a permanent safeguard.

Inspiration is therefore only possible to us at our own level, and unless we are mentally attuned to a high note the inspiration itself will reach no lofty measure. It is true that a mood of exaltation, of earnest prayer or aspiration, may enable us to catch a glimpse of the higher vision, but under these circumstances it is apt to be elusive and fragmentary. The condition of any permanent influx is that the attunement should be habitually and continuously lofty. When this condition is at length reached we are not so very far from that "prayer without ceasing," which most truly means "the practice of the presence of God."

The avenue of inspiration is the subconscious part of the mind, that part of us which in fact constitutes the greater self. In ordinary life this department of mind is more or less shielded by the consciousness. It would retain the permanent impress of every idea it came across, were it not that the consciousness off-hand and summarily rejects a number of impressions which might otherwise prove detrimental. One man calls another a fool, but this one knows very well that he is nothing of the kind, and so the idea carries very little weight in its record on the subconscious. On the other hand, if there were no protective mechanism of this nature, the subconscious might very well accept the statement and believe that its owner certainly was the fool he had been dubbed. The effect, therefore, of consciousness is thus to limit and reduce this sensitiveness and susceptibility of the subconscious part of mind.

As the consciousness passes out of action, as in dream states, brown studies, and in the induced sleep of hypnosis, this sensitiveness and activity of the subconscious gradually emerges. The normal sleep, or

as Iamblichus calls it—“The night-time of the body”—is, to continue his remark, “the day-time of the soul.” Thus it is so often in the Bible stories that we find the phrase—“The Lord—or the Angel of the Lord—appeared, in a dream.” These waves of thought and Inspiration are continually lapping the margin of our subconscious selves, both by day and by night, leaving the dream-traces of their impress as the ripple leaves its marks upon the sand. It is the connection between this under-mind and the consciousness that is so frequently at fault, so that we remain unaware of the tidings. Usually the consciousness is kept so busily engaged that it never has a minute to itself, and so peace, quiet, and receptivity are unknown. The subconscious tries hard to get in its modest word occasionally and edgeways, but the consciousness rarely stops talking: the whole business is one-sided. Plenty of material goes from the consciousness to the subconscious, but comparatively little is able to come in the reverse direction.

This, of course, is a distorted method of existing: there should ever be in the mind a process corresponding to the in-breathing and out-breathing of the lungs. The active and acquisitive consciousness procures the mental food: the subconscious stores this up, assimilates it, and turns it into a kind of inner mentor or conscience which in due course issues its orders and offers its advice. But just as we are said to stifle the “still, small voice,” so also do we strangle our possible inventions and discoveries, and so do we cause our inspirations to remain still-born. This is the price we pay for our mad rush after the things that do not matter. We have said that no aspirant ever lacks a teacher, but we would further say that when a person is content to make use of the subconscious powers he possesses, he will find that the knowledge and the inspiration he earnestly seeks will be granted him. “With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the heart of things.”<sup>[10]</sup> The acorn is already in the garden of the mind, we need only to provide the requisite conditions for growth, and the oak tree will then follow as a matter of course.

Things grow and fashion themselves in this under-mind, as the novelist and dramatist will testify. The artist finds his picture forming itself before his inner vision, and so the musician hears his composition. “It comes,” they say: so does the oak. But like the oak it can only come when conditions allow, and one of the main conditions is that the consciousness should not rule the roost, and hold sway and dominance to the exclusion and smothering of the still, small voice. “Be still, and know.”

Many things and conditions clog communication from the under-mind to the consciousness. The well-being of the body is of the utmost importance: a clogged and constipated body is no medium for inspiration. High living kills the genius of inspiration, and masterpieces are more often produced in the garret than where luxury rules. Success is an even greater test of true genius than is poverty. A bilious attack will put a stop to the most perfervid outpourings of genius, and a common cold in the nose will play havoc with a work of Art. An unstable temperament will have its moments of exaltation and its hours of despair: this is sensitiveness uncontrolled. Sensitiveness is indeed the stock-in-trade of all who work in the temple of Art, but unless it be controlled by reins of more than ordinary strength it is a very doubtful blessing. We must ever be able to keep our souls in tune so that they afford no echo to the undesirable. Indulgence of the body in any form hampers its work as an instrument of the spirit, while self-discipline (tho' by no means to the verge of asceticism) increases its sensitiveness, and occasional quiet periods afford the opportunity for the subconscious treasures to reveal themselves.

On the mental side, selfishness is one of the most complete and effectual deadeners of inspiration. The delicate intimations of finer things can make no impression on a hide-bound mind. As Trine somewhere puts it—"The man who is always thinking of himself generally looks as if he were thinking of something disagreeable." The self-centred mind is a mind closed to other things, and to this extent it is nearly always unbalanced and distorted. Under these conditions such inspiration as it may receive is liable to be of an uncouth and bizarre nature. Hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness tune the mind to very undesirable levels, and at this level it will come in touch with the whole body of similar undesirable thought that is circulating around it. It both gives out and receives. Such a mind is indeed doing active work in the world, but in the wrong direction. Nevertheless, the individual who sets himself to work positively and constructively to utilise inspiration, as it assuredly may be used, is in some degree helping his generation and becoming a prophet, and maybe a saviour.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE INTERPRETER

“I like joy, for it is life. I preach joy, for it alone gives the power of creating useful and lasting work”

*Jaques Dalcroze*

There are, roughly speaking, three classes of interpreters in Music: performers or executants, composers, and teachers. The function of each of these is, by a special sensitiveness, to apprehend the message of spirit, and then, by their own technique and in their own particular way, to pass it on for the benefit of others. In the body the nervous system, which is the link between spirit and matter, serves somewhat the same purpose. Spirit is too tenuous to be able to act directly upon the comparatively inert matter of the body, but through the medium of the brain and nervous system it makes contact with spirit at the one end, and at the other the nerves control the muscular system, which effects the necessary and desired movements. Thus the spirit in music is sensed by the artist in solitude and communion, and is given out by him to the multitude in public.

The artist thus necessarily has two sides to his work, the inner and the outer, the artistic and the technical. No amount of technique alone will ever make an artist, nor will artistic or spiritual perception by itself enable the message to secure adequate treatment. Both sides are indispensable. But there has been far too much worship of mere technique in Music, until at times even the fact that there has been any message at all has been overlooked. In times, happily now gone by, a simple melody which perhaps by itself might have conveyed a homely message, has been smothered under showers of variations, decked out in wearisome arpeggios, and entangled in meaningless scales, until it has reminded one of nothing so much as a vulgar and greatly over-dressed woman: and yet this has been looked upon as music. Technique is indeed necessary, but only as a means to an end. Directly it begins to obscure the meaning, or is developed for its own sake without reference to its task, it is missing the mark. It puts itself on a par with the stupidity that leads a man to undertake to play the piano for twenty-four hours without stopping.

So many hours' scales per diem would be warranted to drive the spirit of music to distraction: the utmost perfection in scales does not



of necessity lead to any illuminating message. It cannot be too strongly urged that the feeling and the emotion are the real things, and that the object of technique is simply that these may be expressed in the best and most intelligible manner. Indeed the artist himself is secondary in importance to the message, it is the spirit that works in and through him that must ever come first. The true artist never seeks to obtrude, or to make his own personality the first thing. He will, of course, endeavour to make his technique fully equal to all demands that can be made of him, but he will realise that he is doing his work in trust. "No MAN ever did any great work yet: he became a free channel through which the eternal powers moved."<sup>[1]</sup> In thus working the artist shines, as does the electric bulb, by reason of the unlimited power which according to his own measure may flow through him: and this limitless power may be relied upon to secure its own effect, if only the steward be faithful.

Contrast the work done in this spirit with that accomplished under the stimulus of financial gain, or for the end of mere selfish display. The latter is a species of artistic prostitution. Superficially the performances may seem something alike, the difference may be intangible, but it exists and is real. Time is ever the winnower. Things always prove their survival value, that is to say the real things last, while the shams are sooner or later extinguished. It is necessary, no doubt, to make a living, no one will be so foolish as to overlook this elementary fact: but the mere aim of making a living only too often obscures the actual meaning of life. Balanced and informed views of life work, through a law of consonance, to ensure a corresponding equilibrium in the outer circumstances: in other words, if we seek first the inner Kingdom, all these things, financial means and so forth, will be added. But there are thousands who drive for the financial and other incidental ends, and as a matter of fact miss the Kingdom entirely. To find the personal centre of gravity in the world is to master life, to fail to find it is to be mastered by life.

A performance that has self as its central motive can never ring true or achieve any lasting success. Inferior music may be decked out by a capable performer to sound impressive or pretentious, or be invested with a glamour which is largely fictitious, but this surely amounts to false pretences. It is simply a method of misleading the public. Such a performer has misconceived his function, which should be to act as interpreter, guide, philosopher, and friend to those who follow his efforts. What is to be said to the singer of royalty ballads? Here is a vocalist who receives, maybe, two or three guineas for each dozen

times he sings particular songs, the publisher of the song in question being his paymaster. Of this type of song a contemporary Musical Journal states:—"Every serious musician knows it, and, scenting the boredom, tries to avoid it. It is highly sentimental, it moves within a limited scope, emotionally and technically, and it deals with a few well-worn subjects. Gardens, spring, sunshine, flowers—these are favourite themes. If only, the singer tells us, he could have a cottage on the hillside, with honeysuckle round the door (this appears to be of great importance), heaven would indeed be there." These MAY be compositions of artistic worth, in which case financial gain and true musical interest consort together: but on the other hand they may NOT. Which, then, is to receive the first consideration? Is the artist to refuse the guineas because the ballad possesses no intrinsic worth, or is he to pocket the cash and deck out with all the devices of his Art the twopenny-ha'penny shop-tune, and make it sound something like the real thing? No doubt under these circumstances the song may achieve a certain measure of appreciation. Some of the audience will buy it, and only when they come to try it at home will they realise what feeble stuff it truly is. The artist has been paid to betray those who trusted in him and followed his taste. In this he may have been eminently successful, but what is the value of such success? And what of Art—and Music?

Wherein is the particular glory of a top note, or the specific value of a compass that extends a note-and-a-half beyond that of anyone else? Why should it be considered meritorious to be able to bang louder or to scramble more quickly over the keys than one's competitors? Yet we have certainly met singers and players who gloried in such accomplishments. A performer may also know every device and trick of the trade, he may be well aware of what will go down with his audience, he may play up to all their little foibles and weaknesses and give them exactly what they want: we can indeed scarcely quarrel with this. But so many are apparently content to allow the matter to remain on this lowly level. A singer who is thus able to play upon his audience and hold them in his grip can surely also lead them up to the appreciation of better things.

An audience is normally receptive and impressionable, they come expecting to receive satisfaction and enjoyment for the money they have expended in the purchase of a ticket, or because they have some other interest in the proceedings. Presumably if they were not interested they would not be there. This element of expectation stimulates their receptivity, and aids the performer in his work of

giving out. Whatever the audience receives, by the mere fact of its making some impression on the delicate nerve-stuff of the brain, is retained and becomes actually a part of them. Thus the artist is definitely building the minds of his audience: he is forming their taste, and giving them that material in mind which will enable them to enjoy and understand music the better for the future. He is passing on the message according to his ability. Therefore that individual who is merely seeking for compass, technique, press notices, or his fee, shows that he has not appreciated the elements of his task. Being thus in search of all the things that really do not matter, he is putting himself into a position that will ensure him a more or less comfortable mediocrity, provide he is lucky enough to escape actual failure.

We call to mind a press criticism that appeared in a first-class London daily newspaper, with reference to a singer quite unknown to fame. It stated that “every note was pure joy.” Could one say anything finer than this, and would not anything added to it but serve to spoil it? It epitomises what we have here been endeavouring to express. There could be no “pure joy” apart from spirit, and in giving this forth in song the singer achieved the aim of Art. This joy would become part of the life of those who heard her, because it can never be too clearly understood that we are built of our memories, and though we seem to forget, yet these memories are absolute. So the joy that the singer gave out went to gladden the world, and that which she gave, paradoxically enough, remained with her. That which we express, by the record of that expression we tend to become.

Herein the personality of the interpreter counts for much. The music, it is true, carries its own meaning and message, but this is reinforced by the mediumship and the imagination of the performer. “Imagination is the life of art. Why so many performers give such little pleasure and leave the audience coldly critical is simply because their imagination is of the feeblest.”<sup>[12]</sup> Necessarily there is always a certain coloration from the mind which transmits the message, just as the tones of two violins though played by the same hand might be different. Moreover, as a resonant instrument would amplify the sound and an inferior one would hamper it, so a greater artist would interpret a message to more effect than one less capable. The gramophone will give us the actual notes of the singer, but it depends upon ourselves as to whether we catch the real thing or not. What is actually there is the shell: there is no personality unless we ourselves build up that personality of the singer in our imagination. We must

supply that which the machine lacks, or else perforce go without. When the artist is present in person we need no effort of the imagination, and though the machine can give us a personal rendering it can never offer us the personality. In much the same way the mechanical piano-player may give So-and-so's exact rendering if only we follow the requisite directions, but it is impossible for it to be the same. Two things seem alike, but one is stuffed, and the other hollow.

Personality, then, must always be a vital factor since it colours and vitalises, as well as reinforces the meaning of the music. Spirit is a fact, but a beautiful personality will invest it with all the glamour of romance. The emotion may be "pure joy" but it needs a warm heart to give it out to full effect to a coldish world. Consequently, for the beauty to shine through, the artist's personality must be finely wrought. A selfish soul might sing a love-song, but a woman would not be taken in by it—unless she thought twice: it would not ring true enough. Beauty lies in the heart of all worthy music, so the artist who studies it and lives in its atmosphere gradually builds that beauty into the life and the character: the mere expression henceforth makes it part of him through memory. So, beautiful thoughts are needful food to the mind of the artist, and no amount of cleverness in the simulation of this or that emotion will ever enable the same effect to be produced, as when beauty is reinforced by beauty. Personality counts beyond all calculation.

The music that is written shows whether its composer was an artist or a mechanic in music. "The spirit of anything which a man makes, or does, is his nature expressed in those things, and the fineness or poorness of his work and actions depends upon the way in which he feels or thinks."<sup>[13]</sup> The academic writer, steeped in his contrapuntal devices and harmonic progressions, so intent upon the orthodox resolution of his discords, is apt to produce excellent dry bones without the informing spirit. We have even heard it stated that no music publisher would deign to consider for publication a song manuscript with Mus. Doc. on the title page. Yet Parry's books of "English Lyrics" stand as permanent testimony that scholarly music may also contain the emotional and spiritual elements to infuse it with abundant life: the pity is that the combination is none too frequent. "A vast proportion of what is printed and sold as music... is meaningless, and therefore worthless."<sup>[14]</sup> Such music as is composed, or selected, for popular consumption is frankly written for this purpose of pot-boiling, and as such it settles its own fate. We need

waste no tears upon it. Nor need we devote much consideration to the sentimental ballads issued by the hundred, for “if music has no further function than to appeal to the emotions, then it is nothing better than melodious nonsense.”<sup>[15]</sup> Of the dance and other miscellaneous music issued broadcast some, no doubt, is genuine music, but the greater part of it is avowedly commercial in tone and intention: in any spiritual scale its weight is of the lightest.

The interpreter who works in collaboration with others, the choral singer or the orchestral performer, should be bound by the same canons of Art as the soloist. A chorus does not merely consist of a certain number of voices, any more than eleven football players constitute a team. Even the footballers must have their technique and must play with their heads as well as their feet: but to ensure success they must individually have subordinated their personal interests to that of the team, they must play in the spirit of the game. Equally so a choral singer must first have the vocal ability, then the intelligence, and furthermore the spiritual vision. His individual aims must also be subordinated in “team play,” so that collectively, as individually in the case of the soloist, the purport of the music may find its due expression.

The one point to be emphasised is that, in whatever capacity the exponent and interpreter of Art be concerned, the paramount consideration must be the transmission of the artistic impulse. People do not send telegrams flying about the country except for the purpose of conveying a message: in the absence of a message there is, naturally, no telegram. It would be a step in the right direction if it were generally recognised that Art-work should be based upon somewhat the same substantial and bed-rock foundation.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE TEACHER

“The teachers of this country have its future in their hands”

*William James*

Ideas on the subject of the teaching of Music are changing at such a rapid rate to-day that the position of the teacher as an interpreter may well receive some consideration. The study of psychology and the many new discoveries in the realm of mind bid fair to revolutionise our conception of teaching: the old standards are fast becoming obsolete. Once the idea of education was more or less to get something into the pupil, the newer ideal is to get something out: instead of compression or repression the process is now regarded as one of expression. We aim at developing the latent faculties and exploiting the hidden resources of the mind. It is assumed that the various qualities and abilities are embodied in mind, just as the possibilities of the oak were implanted in the acorn: it is the function of the teacher to ensure the requisite conditions under which these qualities may come to fruition.

From this it is clear that the modern teacher is more occupied in teaching the pupil than the subject. The old method of grinding in scales, scales, and yet more scales until those scales had become second nature is recognised as being worse than merely futile. What can it profit a pupil if he gain the whole world of scales and lose his artistic soul? So also with other points, the centre of attention is transferred from the subject to the pupil. Furthermore, the wise teacher recognises that as music is a part of life, so the understanding of music should lead to a larger comprehension of life. There are no watertight compartments in our lives, everything is acted upon and reacts: all life is of a piece, and nothing comes out of the mind in exactly the same condition as it entered. Things become transformed and assimilated in the process of mental digestion. Consequently the discerning teacher knows that he is working in terms of life through the agency of the music. He is helping to modify, form, or transform the mind of the pupil through his memories, he is moulding his character: and his character weighs in the eternal scales. The teaching thus stands on a base that is wider than life itself, and such a teacher

is invested with a dignity and worth that can never attach to the time-server or the crammer.

The Royal Academy of Music gives the Licentiate diploma for (*a*) teachers and (*b*) performers: this is a technical distinction without any real difference. It is the function of both alike to reveal and to pass on a message of spirit. The performer passes it on to an audience of many, and the teacher to a little audience of one. Teachers are “artists to whom the most priceless material has been committed.”<sup>[16]</sup> There is an idea abroad that those who are not clever enough to perform can always take to teaching, but this is of course a lamentable perversion of the truth. There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit, and certainly as high a degree of spiritual perception is necessary for the teacher as for the executive artist. The teacher has merely chosen a different technique for its expression. Not so many years ago the teaching profession was known as “the refuge of the destitute,” but we are changing all that with the revaluation of values which is being forced upon us by the logic of events. In course of time the old type of teacher must become as extinct as the dodo.

Effective teaching can never be done to pattern, for the simple reason that pupils are not machines or blocks of wood and cannot be turned out to sample. Every pupil is unique: he is the inheritor of a spirit which is peculiarly his own, and of a body in its endowments and proportions unlike that of anyone else, and in his nervous system he possesses special pre-dispositions and “potentially linked paths” which provide him with particular adaptabilities and traits. Were the teacher to treat every pupil alike, his scheme would probably truly fit none of them: but as a matter of fact each one of them calls for insight and special treatment. So the teacher learns from every pupil, and the experience garnered from contact with the many phases of human nature renders his judgment the surer and his sympathy the more sound. But this, quite obviously, is mind-moulding and character-building, with the emphasis laid upon the teaching of the pupil rather than the subject.

The three generally accepted divisions of mind are (*a*) intellect; (*b*) feelings; and (*c*) will; and in these directions the teaching of music should have far-reaching effects upon the culture and the outlook. Observation is the root of all mental growth: it supplies the mind with the necessary food for development and expansion, and according to the range and definiteness of the evidence supplied by the senses, so is the foundation laid for a good memory and a lively quality of



imagination. The earliest lessons will thus be a stimulus to mental growth: the pupil will learn to take in by the eye and the ear, and what he takes in will enable him to understand and to appreciate more and yet more. He will be taught that everything in music means something, and even exercises will be invested with a meaning and a purpose of their own. Purely mechanical work has gone, never, we may hope, to return: and meaningless music is discarded in favour of that which expresses something. It may illustrate a mood or an emotion, a scene, an action, or a fairy tale—it matters not what so long as it possesses a meaning to lend it point and purpose. So right from the beginning the action of the pupil will be the expression of the emotions and ideas that hold sway in his mind.

In this connection we may quote an actual instance. A teacher writes:—"A young pupil (age 14) came for a lesson, playing Farjeon's 'Prelude and Pavane.' She had learnt the 'Prelude,' and had had one lesson, a fortnight before, on the 'Pavane.' We went through the technique, and I told her a little about the 'Pavane'—when it was danced, the derivation of the name, and so on. When she played it, she played it very, very slowly, but quite correctly and finished in detail. I asked her if she liked it quite as slowly as that, and she replied that she thought 'the Court ladies with their long dresses would not be able to dance any quicker' and that it 'sounded grander very slowly.' So I left it." This, we may add, is an illustration of method quoted by a teacher in a diploma Examination paper, but it aptly shows the new spirit. The teacher had no mind to force her own views upon the pupil. Had she insisted that the dance should be played more quickly, she might have spoiled the child's mental picture and destroyed her interest in the piece. The incident also points the way in which the pupil's observation, imagination, and powers of deduction were being stimulated, so that, as we have been endeavouring to show, the music—of value for its own sake—was also ministering to the larger end of life-growth.

The world of affairs and the world of education see to it that our intellect and will are duly and properly brushed up, they exact their penalties in default from the stupid and the invertebrate, but the feeling and emotional side of the nature is too often ignored. It is left to develop by chance instead of being nurtured by design. As a consequence a vast amount of distorted feeling exists in the world, and a very great deal of emotion is repressed. Music is at once a means of cultivating the rightful feelings towards life, and an outlet for the repressed emotions. The interpreter recognises that his true



function is to serve his day and his generation, and so he places this ideal of Service in the forefront of his vision. If he substitute Selfishness he is permanently wrongly adjusted to life, and nothing can go truly right with him. He is off the lines of his spiritual evolution, and Nature will take pains to impress the fact upon him: she has her larger vision to which he must, willy-nilly, conform. The teacher, in handing on the torch, will thus be able at the very outset to point to this ideal of Service, exemplified in finding out the beauty or the meaning of the music, and in passing it on for the benefit of others in song or sound.

Repressed emotions are now recognised as a potent source of trouble, both mental and physical. In the adolescent stage of youth vital forces surge through the body, they are perhaps indefinable but they are none the less potent. "The emotions are there, and it is for us to find the way in which we can best turn them upward: the time has passed when we need or can deny their existence, or their expression."<sup>[17]</sup> These emotions cannot be permanently repressed, they are too deeply embedded in the self: they may find an outlet in the amours of youth, or in some other way. But music offers a means and a channel through which these emotions may flow in useful direction, and this is a most valuable service. Failing legitimate expression they not infrequently find an inappropriate or distorted outlet. There is discord within, and it is far better that the discord should be resolved harmoniously rather than ill, or not at all. The study of music at this period may thus result in marked benefit to the physical health in a perfectly natural manner: for to forbid any expression to these emotions would be much as if we forbade a canary to sing or a lambkin to jump. If they can be reflected in "pure joy" in song we may indeed be sure that the outlet they are finding is a happy one. The subject is a very important one, but it leads us far afield from the present scheme. The reader who is interested may find further treatment of this topic in the present writer's "The Hidden Self, and its Mental Processes."

The modern teacher has progressed beyond the stage of imposing his own standard of judgment upon the pupil. By introducing the element of musical appreciation and making the pupil familiar with a wide range of musical ideas, he will gradually build up his power of discrimination and judgment and his standard of taste. These are no fixed things, but will grow as the experience of the pupil himself grows. As his sympathy and insight also increase, so will his knowledge of the good and evil of music progress. This is a vastly

different process to any arbitrary enforcement of “this is good and that is bad” standards, and indeed it is but a poor compliment to any teacher when we find pupil after pupil a more or less complete imitation of the same original.

One thing that is conspicuously lacking in the world to-day is the ability to be one’s self. Suggestion and habit are ever at work to kill originality and to stifle self-reliance and initiative. Thousands can copy, few can invent. The reason may be that only the few are able and willing to go to the fountain-head of spirit, where there is the infinite variety of universal thought to be their inspiration. The many are content to live their teachers’ ideas over and over again, building their lives and abilities on quite ordinary models in a quite ordinary way. In music we already possess far too many “dittos,” ditto programmes, ditto compositions, ditto renderings, and ditto ideals. Praise the Lord for originality wherever it may be found. The conventional goes round and round in a circle, like a puppy after its own tail: but originality rises at each revolution and so reaches on and up, in progress like a spiral. So to-day the teacher fosters originality, shaping it with kindly criticism or helpful suggestion, but never damning it with a fatal “don’t.” Education’s maxim to-day is “Do; but do better next time.”

In this larger view of teaching, the technique, though not despised and rejected, is relegated to its proper place in the scheme of things. The cult of the head and the heart predominates, and the whole course of the instruction is an integral part of the training for life. If it be true that we are making “houses built without hands, for our souls to live in,” then music is determining no small part of the architecture for the student who follows the gleam. The inspired teacher (and, without the vision, teaching must ever be the veriest drudgery) is engaged upon one of the noblest of tasks as well as one of the most responsible. We may even hope that one day the world will awaken to this fact. Incidentally teachers themselves, by thinking more nobly of their tasks, can do much to dignify their calling. They are truly in the van of progress, and “with the power of the Spirit almost untried and the possibilities of Prayer as little known, with the inheritance of Love still unclaimed and the ocean of Truth yet unexplored, life is full of an immensity of purpose.”<sup>[18]</sup>

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOUL OF SONG

“All the hearts of men were softened  
By the pathos of his music:  
For he sang of peace and freedom,  
Sang of beauty, love, and longing:  
Sang of death, and life undying  
In the Islands of the Blessed,  
In the Kingdom of Ponemah,  
In the land of the Hereafter.”

*Longfellow*

The power to sing is innate in practically everybody, and the number of people who are actually incapable of any musical expression through the voice is really very small. Suggestion plays an important part in this matter, for there are few children having mothers or nurses who sing to them who fail to pick up and imitate that singing. The reason is fairly clear, because every idea in mind tends to pass into action unless something intervenes to stop it: consequently the child having the idea of singing in mind, simply from having heard others sing, has the initial impulse to song. As he gradually acquires the control and co-ordination of his faculties, song will follow as a matter of course. On the other hand if the child never hears anyone sing, from where is the motor impulse to come?

Those good people who boast that they cannot sing have very often, by the simple denial of their ability, ensured a kind of mental atrophy in the function. It is quite a usual thing for us to fasten unnecessary limitations upon ourselves by refusing to believe in our own powers, and most of us have a large stock of very real inhibitions, which prevent us from doing things otherwise well within our capacity. If we do not believe we can do a thing, as a rule we do not try: or if we try, it is in a half-hearted, beaten-before-we-start kind of fashion. Thus we find that as a matter of experience things generally do turn out for us according to our belief. It is in this spirit that a man professes himself unable to tell the difference between the National Anthem and “Pop goes the Weasel.” There are cases, of course, where the individual may be able to distinguish the tunes mentally, and yet may be unable to sing them correctly, or even to vary the tones of the voice according to the desired pattern: in this case the fault probably lies in a lack of the power of co-ordinating the various

activities. The necessary associations between the hearing centres and the motor centres for the control of voice have not been built up. But they can be so built, and then the inability to sing vanishes. A person who can speak has the necessary machinery for song, and to say that one has “no voice” is mostly nonsense.

Many people possess quite good voices until they learn singing. Their natural aptitude, which so largely depends upon the models they may have had for imitation in the earliest days, is possibly quite excellent. Then comes the Voice Specialist on the scene with his pet theories for improving upon Nature, and he gets busy. He may have his ideas upon “breaks,” registers, and a thousand other details. Perhaps he has written a book on the way in which Nature has made a botch of the voice, creating it in a number of sections like a fishing rod, specially to provide an interesting and lucrative profession for the voice trainer. On the other hand he may be wise enough to thank Heaven when he finds a good natural voice, and leave it alone. Voices when naturally used have beauty, ease, compass, and an even tone without break throughout: this, we assert, in spite of the fact that many a famous contralto possesses apparently two voices, so marked is the break. There is a technical alteration of the working of the vocal chords at a certain pitch, but with a rightly-used voice this is automatic and unfelt: the whole body is full of such wonderful adjustments. To be called upon to deal consciously with such details is generally proof that they have gone wrong. Your attention to your digestion is enforced by dyspepsia: nobody notices a perfectly acting digestion.

Some voices are expressive and carry emotion easily, while others are hard and inelastic. Some correspondence in the temperament will nearly always be found. Therefore the teacher who works at the voice (which is a means of expression of the temperament) without touching the inner characteristics, is like the man who tries to make an ill-regulated clock keep time by altering the hands. Lack of tone colour is not to be cured by cultivating a number of different sizes and shapes for the mouth and a selection of assorted smiles for the features. If a person feels sad, he will talk sadly. Carrying the same principle into song, we find that a voice naturally shows the timbre appropriate to the mood. Therefore in order to ensure proper tone colour the prime requisite is imagination and the ability vividly to call up and experience the various emotions. It will be evident that we are endeavouring to impart into vocal work precisely those same principles which we assert to be fundamental to the whole of music,

namely—the importance of the idea as behind, distinct from, and manifested through, the technical means. The vocal machinery must necessarily be in first-class order, but the influence of the mind upon the body is so intimate and so extraordinary that even technical acquirement hangs to no small extent upon mental working.

Seeing that song, then, is to be the vehicle for emotion, even though that emotion be so tenuous as almost to defy verbal expression, for the most part we ally words and music. The timbre of a voice, singing tones without words, might carry a message to the sensitive, just as the inflection of a voice may be exquisite joy or suffering to a lover: but it would be insufficient to move the average hearer to any response. The reason is that there is always a dual process at work in mind: there is the sense-perception of the actual sound, and a brain-recognition of its meaning. This latter must be supplied by the hearer himself from his own imagination or experience. The non-musical multitude has neither, and is therefore unable to complete this second process of recognition. Thus the hearer hears, but does not understand. It is probably for some such reason as this that we resort to words to make the message clear. Herein lies the importance of the words themselves, and of the diction of the singer.

Quite notoriously, many singers entirely fail to make their words intelligible to the listener, and in the majority of cases this is due to insufficient stressing of the consonants. Vowel tones carry, while consonants do not. If we want to shout to anyone we call out “Hi” or “Hey”: never by any chance do we try to reach them with a “P-p-p-p-p” or a “T-t-t-t-t,” and for precisely this reason. If, therefore, a singer wishes his words to carry to the end of the hall he must needs exaggerate his consonants to allow for this loss in transit: the vowels will look after themselves. Then, although the balance of the words as they are uttered may be a trifle distorted, they will nevertheless reach the hearers in due proportion. Comfort in listening is greatly increased when this sense-perception is clear and unambiguous, and the brain-recognition is easy by reason of a certain familiarity. When the sense-perception is blurred, as in faulty diction, extra work is thrown on to the brain: listening then becomes a strain, and the brain is fatigued with supplying the details which it supposes the singer to have intended. The listener has, as it were, to put in his consonants for him, to dot his “i’s” and cross his “t’s.”

Some singers distort their vowel sounds almost beyond recognition, and many pupils seem to be definitely taught to adopt the habit. Then

“and” becomes “awnd,” and the various words take on new disguises after the reputed Oxford model of “He that hath yaws to yaw, let him yaw.” Singing is but glorified speech, it is not a thing apart, neither is there one language of the speaker and another of the vocalist. This distortion may be due to affectation or to ignorance, but in either case we could well do without it. In cases where the actual production of the voice is mechanically stiff, rigid, and therefore distorted, it is not likely that we can secure a free and flexible musical elocution. We do occasionally meet singers whose diction is delightful to hear because of its absolute freedom and complete naturalness, but these only serve to heighten by their excellence the shortcomings of the many.

Consideration of the manner in which the words are put forth leads us to the matter of the words themselves. It is difficult to find even a modicum of meaning, to say nothing of spirit, in much of the verse that achieves musical setting to-day. A critic in a London Daily some time back inquired if all our native poets were paralysed, the query being suggested by an examination of a representative batch of songs. But the poet is hardly to blame for the present state of affairs. In the wedding of words and music, the usual routine is for the author of the lyric to submit his effort to the composer for his consideration. The composer will neither select nor waste his time in setting the better class of verse because, as he says, the publishers will not look at it. The publishers will not print and issue it because, so they say, the public will not purchase it. The public might very well retort that they get precious little chance to listen to it, since royalty ballads come first: nor to come in contact with it, for the ordinary dealer does not stock it. There, then, is the vicious circle quite complete. But the poets are not paralysed, they are merely inarticulate by reason of this commercialisation of Art. At the best of times the average lyric author has a difficult and somewhat heart-breaking task to dispose of his wares, and we need not further harrow his artistic soul by suggestions of literary impotence.

It must, however, be admitted that on the whole there is an extraordinary poverty and bareness of idea and inspiration in the general run of songs: neither Nature nor Love are themes that can ever be finally exhausted while human nature remains as it is, but the treatment can be so stereotyped that it eventually wears threadbare. It is possible to become thoroughly weary of roses and gardens, and gardens of roses, gardens without roses, and gardens where we hope there will be roses. It is such a pity, too, that there are so few rhymes to “love.” Yet even in dissatisfaction there exists the element of

progress: if we are bored with the present style we shall demand something better, and the demand will create the supply. But to swing from bareness and boredom to the other extreme of abstruseness and complexity is no remedy: in these latter qualities there exists no special compensating virtue. Listening to a song as it is sung is very different to reading the verse at leisure. The sense of the song must be caught as it flies, the verse can be read and re-read if necessary, until its meaning be clear. It is no progress, therefore, to worship the turgid and obscure, whether in words or music, or both. We may pretend that we appreciate things because we cannot understand them, but that is only a concession to convention and a convenient way of smothering artistic conscience.

Of late an outcry has arisen, on the part of wise men in exalted station, about “beastly tunes,” but surely if a tune can attain sufficient popularity to earn the picturesque adjectives of the academic, there must be some element in it which has escaped the attention of its detractors. The Southern Syncopated Orchestra, which played for some lengthy period in London a little while back, showed that popular music might yet be extremely clever and artistic in scope and performance. There were high-brow musicians who would not even go to listen to such, but preferred to condemn it unheard: the loss was emphatically that of the high-brows. Humour abounded in this little band of performers on such a strange array of instruments, and it appeared as if the players enjoyed their work no less, at any rate, than their audience. Yet their programme was full of “tunes.” Is any tune in itself “beastly”? Or is it that the brain-recognition, to which we have alluded, decks out the tune in sordid or sweet trappings according to its own nature? We certainly know that in other directions we are apt to see things according to the colour of our own mental vision.

These tunes, however, that have become so popular, have the three essentials of music strongly marked: they have decided rhythm, attractive melody, and harmony at times quite good. Are we to try and attract the multitude to music by muddling up or emasculating rhythm, or by eschewing melody and banishing anything that intrigues the ear, and by supplying an harmonic scheme that awakens no brain-recognition and cannot in consequence be understood? Well, the conventional suburbanite may gush over such indeterminate and invertebrate music, saying, “Yes, isn’t it just too lovely,” but the rough and tumble individuals who make up most of the world will plump for the “tune” every time. Give him what he wants, and then

induce him to want something better, but avoid the mistake of trying to turn him into a musical vegetarian while his meat-eating appetite has no liking for the diet.

The incongruity of some of the songs we hear sung is truly appalling: we find a charming maid, love for whom might honour any man yet born, singing “Less than the dust,... even less am I,” and so on. Lies, all lies, even though she lie melodically with charm and with apparent conviction. We have passionate love-songs sung by guileless individuals who would be inexpressibly shocked if you explained to them the meaning of the sentiment to which they had been giving utterance. There are operatic scenes, dealing with abduction and all sorts of uncomfortable situations, and again youngsters declaim of their somewhat indecorous emotions with gusto and—let us hope—a sublime insensibility of all that they imply. They are warbling words to music, but they are not singing, for the meaning is not there. The fault, of course, lies in the traditional idea that all aspiring vocalists must learn certain things, just as that all pianists should go through a corresponding round of instrumental compositions. Why should they? Many of these classical examples that we accept as the right things to sing or play are hopelessly antiquated and out of date: they would not stand a chance as new compositions to-day. Antiquity itself is only a recommendation if we are collectors of curios. The literature of Art is far too comprehensive for anyone to study it all, we can but touch a fragment of the whole: why, then, should that fragment be determined by tradition and custom alone? Will anybody’s clothes fit me: am I not likely to secure a better fit by being measured for my own? And why should not the same consideration apply to my mental outfit? It is the same desperate fear of originality and initiative, coupled with a certain unwillingness to take individual responsibility: it is the “ditto” idea again, and yet a writer has said “imitation is suicide.” Let music be studied historically and in its development, by all means, this indeed is necessary: but to spend hours and hours learning to play or sing something just because “everybody does it” is the sheerest waste of time, unless the music so played or sung still bears a living message for the performer.

Protest might also be registered against the unadulterated rubbish that is put forward as a translation when a song or operatic excerpt of foreign origin is rendered in English. Of grand opera even the *Daily Telegraph* is moved to say that “the translations are in most cases literary nightmares.” Mere baldness might be excused, and even



doggerel overlooked, but one has only to turn to almost any of the current standard translations of foreign songs to see that the matter is worse than this. To expect a student to get up and participate in this verbal foolishness and ineptitude, by endeavouring to express as genuine the balderdash that poses as sentiment and sense, is an insult to his or her intelligence.

Finally there remains the “graveyard” school of composition. Here we have the author or composer, or both of them, seeing the world much worse than it is, and think that they do Art a service by putting their realistic conceptions on permanent record. We would join issue with all the various methods—song, literature, drama, and painting—of giving the unpleasant a wider and more effective publicity. The suggestive nature of all of these negative things cannot be overlooked, and should not be underestimated. The Biblical advice is to the point: “Whatsoever things are true, lovely, and of good report: think on these.” The graveyard and realistic schools reverse this sage precept, saying, in effect, “Whatsoever things are nasty, unwholesome, and disagreeable—make the most of them: they will always appeal to a certain section whose minds are correspondingly unpleasant.” We prefer the “pure joy” gospel, as being nearer the truth: for spirit is ever pointing the vision upward to what we may become, instead of allowing it to grovel around in the very unpleasant circumstances in which some people are liable to find themselves. The outward vision is transient, the inner vision can build eternal realities. “Are we to beg and cringe and hang on the outer edge of life,—we who should walk grandly? Is it for man to tremble and quake—man who in his spiritual capacity becomes the interpreter of God’s message,—the focus of Divine Light?”<sup>[19]</sup>

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## CHAPTER IX

### MUSIC AND EDUCATION

“Music is not only a source of noble pleasure—everyone admits that, at any rate in theory—it is a form of intellectual and spiritual training with which we really cannot afford to dispense”

*Sir Henry Hadow*

We may agree that education consists in the bringing of the latent possibilities of the individual into action, and one of the most important parts in the process of education is played by memory. The fact that memory places on record our first impression of a thing is the reason why we are able to recognise it on the second occasion: otherwise we should have to make its acquaintance afresh every time. It is memory again which enables us to retain the mental pattern of an action we have once performed, and so to do it the more easily a second time, and on subsequent occasions. Thus we see that everything we express, whether in word, thought, or deed, leaves its mark within us: this impress is, as it were, a brick in our life's edifice, and it has added something to that disposition of mind which constitutes our character.

Mental growth is thus profoundly influenced by the things we express, for whatever we express forthwith becomes part of ourselves. Anything, therefore, that teaches us to express the fine, the noble, or the beautiful, leaves the self by the fact of that expression with the impress of that fineness, nobility, or beauty henceforth in the character. We do not mean that by the utterance of a praiseworthy sentiment a man at once grows estimable, but we do mean that the sentiment according to its intrinsic value and worth has become an element in his make-up. We observe every day in the contrary direction that giving vent to continual complaint soon makes a person grow sour-minded: and incidentally it also makes him grow sour-visaged. It is frequently possible to tell a man's philosophy from his countenance. Those whose efforts are devoted to preaching a violent discontent seem to run to type, acquiring a discontented kind of countenance to match their views. Equally so a person whose outlook is more balanced, and whose character is gentler, will gradually inscribe a finer type of characteristic both in mind and body. The case is very much the same with Art. Those to whom Art stands for beauty and love must necessarily be building themselves of their thoughts,

and so be tending towards their ideal. Thus so far as music becomes the expression of spirit and love, so far its influence upon the individual is permanent and progressive in these directions.

Apparent exceptions will at once spring to mind, and we may ask why musicians as a class do not stand out specifically as more spiritual than their fellows. There are many reasons. Not all musicians pursue their calling with insight and understanding: mere perfunctory performance has the effect of influencing in the direction of the commonplace and the casual, and music is never the sole influence at work, and not always the chief. The character is the result, on balance, of ALL the forces that have played their part, just as the annual balance on profit and loss account represents the net result of all the transactions that have taken place. Unless the spiritual forces at work in an individual's life outweigh the material, the net result will still be on the side of the latter, even though he may have had music in his soul.

When we look at the adolescent of to-day, particularly the town-bred youth of from sixteen to twenty years, we may well ask what opportunity he gets for the expression of any theme of beauty, or for any impression of the like. The mind has a kind of breathing motion, as have the lungs: it takes in, stores up and assimilates, and then expresses. Education must allow for both processes. But our youthful friend has left school, and is probably engaged in some more or less strenuous work which brings him into the closest contact with grown men. From these he derives most of his inspiration: much of it is highly coloured, and some of it is certainly degrading. He does not read, and so knows nothing of the inspiration of literature, and the past is to him a closed book. He comes across nothing artistic, and he hears no concerts. He never goes to church, and you can see him by the thousand loafing about in any large town on a Sunday. "The modern townsman... has forgotten the habits and sentiments of the village from which his forefathers came. An unnatural and unhealthy mode of life, cut off from the sweet and humanising influences of nature, has produced an unnatural and unhealthy mentality, to which we shall find no parallels in the past. Its chief characteristic is profound secularity or materialism. The typical town artisan has no religion and no superstitions: he has no ideals beyond the visible and tangible world of the senses."<sup>[20]</sup>

There is, however, one thing that our young friend does: he sings. We see him, in company with three or four of his fellows, marching

along the street singing the latest music-hall ditty, with all the approved music-hall inflections and mannerisms. Sometimes the group will be accompanied by one of their companions on a mouth organ, and occasionally they will attain to the dignity of two-, or even three-part singing. Now and again we find them “throwing back” to the days of Hucbald the Fleming, and running their harmony in a kind of diaphony a fifth below the melody. But they sing because they like to sing. The idea naturally suggests itself that if more firms and works would assist in making provision for brass bands, string orchestras, and choral societies among their employees, the music would prove to be a humanising agency of the greatest value. Especially would this be the case if some of the higher officials of the firm, not even excluding the directors, would join on a footing of musical equality with the rest. The aloofness of class is a potent cause of misunderstanding, but Art knows nothing of social distinctions. If we knew more of each other we should probably fight a good deal less, and it is just here that the power of music might be used in healing fashion.

On one occasion in a suburban district, outside a branch of the Y.W.C.A. on a Sunday evening, we stopped to listen to some excellent part-singing, and we could not help thinking what an educative influence it would surely prove in the lives of the music-makers. We could wish that such opportunities were more generally available. The provision of Municipal facilities, which would cost very little, would probably be a most sound investment. But everything would in such case hinge upon the conductor: mere perfunctory work at the husk of music would quickly damn any such scheme. In addition it would do definite harm by creating a permanent distaste for music in the minds of those who first were attracted. Something has, of course, been done in the way of providing organ recitals and so on, but we are here suggesting that the working classes should be provided with the chance of being their own music-makers. The use of a room, a fee to the conductor, and possibly a small grant towards the cost of music would be all that was necessary, but who can tell what might be the result in harmony and good feeling?

Folk dances, and the singing of old folk tunes, as taught in the elementary schools, are of great value. There is a grace and poetry of movement about some of the children thus taught, which is engaging in the extreme. Nor can this be without its reflex action upon the mind of the child. When taught to move easily and to express fluently

in pose and gesture, the child will have acquired some tendency towards a corresponding facility of expression in other directions. According to the songs chosen the singing itself provides outlet for the emotions, and stimulates imaginative play. The prosaic life and surroundings of the slum child are sufficiently deadening, and the new mental pictures thus given are in the nature of windows opening on new vistas of life. They suggest views that could come to the child mind in perhaps no other way. The finer type of patriotism can be encouraged by such songs as Parry's "England" (John o' Gaunt's Verse), and the more spiritual element by the same composer's "Jerusalem" (words by Blake); while as an example of the imaginative scene we might mention Dr. Wood's "The Knight's Tomb." Regarding the simpler type of song, we recall the case of an Inspector of Music in Schools who was moved, almost to tears, by the rendering of "Will ye no come back?" by a class of children who had been taught by a truly inspired instructress. A dull teacher, and there are too many, does frequently damp and quench the fires that should be fanned; and the personal element is an enormous factor in the situation.

The mental and intellectual value of music should by no means be overlooked. The mental alertness developed by sight-reading is of much importance. Some children are slow thinkers, and react lethargically: as a class, country children are mentally much slower than town-bred youngsters. A city child quickly has to learn to look after himself, and to make his own decisions on the spur of the moment, and consequently his mental processes are more fluent than those of the bumpkin type. But anything that can be done to accelerate this reaction time is so much added to the efficiency of the individual. Sight-reading, we believe, possesses a special value in this direction. Singing at sight is also a means of developing the co-ordination of the various faculties. There are numbers of people who know things ought to be done, and yet fail to do them. In the case of sight-singing, the mental picture has to be immediately translated into action, it is the essence of the proceeding. The child is thus developing not only the mental faculties, but is also acquiring increased power of regulation and co-ordination, through the training of the faculties of the cerebellum.

It is now becoming generally recognised that the interest of the young in music may be expressed in intellectual and emotional enjoyment, and not only instrumentally and vocally. In other words we realise that good listeners and appreciative understanders of

music are, in their way, as essential as executants. "Shocking as it may seem, hundreds of children 'learn music' for the length of their school life and never hear a masterpiece, and indeed, hear no music at all except such as their own untrained musical sense and half-trained fingers can compass."<sup>[21]</sup> In increasing measure the teaching of music appreciation is coming into vogue, and as an aid to this the piano-player and gramophone are demonstrating their value. The slogan of the musical advance guard is "a gramophone in every school." Teachers who are competent to give first-class expositions of the classics in schools are naturally few and far between, and it would be impossible for even the first-class, with the best will in the world, to cover a range in any way commensurate with that which can be reached mechanically. Therefore the mechanical piano-player with a constant change of rolls, and the gramophone with its ever-increasing list of records, are adjuncts to education which are at present only in the stage of small beginnings. They possess drawbacks and disadvantages, of course, but these are far outweighed by the many solid points that tell in their favour.

The standard of musical accomplishment to be found in the various schools is of very wide range. In the elementary schools there is a certain uniformity of scheme, if not of achievement. But in the Public Schools, and in the preparatory schools which act as feeders to them, there is no uniformity of scheme, and the range of achievement is from a very great deal to just nothing at all. Too much depends upon the individual outlook of the Headmaster. If he be musical, then the music prospers: but if he be not interested in the subject, then the music languishes accordingly. This is not rational. Either music has its value as an educational subject, in which case it ought to be in the curriculum independent of the vagaries of the Headmaster for the time being; or else it has no educational value, and should never be there. Whims in such a matter are out of place: but they are nevertheless too often a deciding factor. In many schools music is frankly regarded as a nuisance, a sort of frilling that is inappropriate to the rigid texture of education. It touches the emotions, and the Public School man has a horror of being even so much as suspected of having emotions.

The average net result is that music has been tolerated rather than encouraged, and most often the boy who elects to study music has to do so at the expense of his playtime. Class singing is sometimes taken in the regular school hours, but more often not. The consequence is that it is frequently regarded as a grind and a bore: an

attitude scarcely conducive to any appreciation of its inner significance. Again, the influence of the Music Master is of extraordinary importance: his subject is identified in the boy mind with himself, and if the master be not respected for his own personality, then the music suffers in precisely that degree. A fine influence can be trusted to make itself felt in every circumstance, though perhaps battles may have to be fought before victory is achieved, and if the musician has grasped the fundamentals of his Art, and realises that it is not so much himself as the spirit that works through him, then the work that he can do both for music and for his little musicians is beyond all price.

In one Public School with which we were closely acquainted the standard of music was extremely high. The "Head" had his own ideas, which occasionally came out in unexpected guise. For example, every Sunday morning there was a choir-practice before Chapel for the non-singers. This, of course, is a contradiction in terms, but an effective procedure in reality. All the boys who were not in the choir had to attend a practice for the musical part of the service, while the choir had the privilege of a free time. There was no grievance about this, and it was taken simply as a matter of routine. Further, in addition to the usual Shields that were won and kept for the year by the various competing "Houses," for cricket, football, sports, cross-country running, etc., there was a "House-singing Shield." This was competed for by the various houses, each of which had to put up an S.A.T.B. (four-part) choir. The competition consisted in the singing of a compulsory glee, chosen by the authorities some months in advance, and a voluntary part-song selected by the competing choir. Both were to be sung without accompaniment. If the house-master happened to be musical he generally undertook the training of the choir: but if he were not, then a head boy took it on. The standard achieved was, as a rule, remarkably good. At the time of which we speak there were five competing houses in a school of some two hundred boys, and this means that in the school there were five complete four-part choirs capable of singing an unaccompanied part-song. Practically every boy belonged to one or other of the choirs, for marks were added to the total in proportion as the number of boys singing rose, as compared with the total number in the house.

We cite this case from our own experience in order to show what has actually been accomplished in the way of fostering the love of music in one Public School. We are aware that this standard would appear entirely visionary to the authorities of some other schools:

there are some to whom the idea of one choir singing in two parts seems more than is practicable. But when music is recognised as an integral part of education, as it used to be in Greece, then we may look forward to a different standard indeed. We may also recognise that unless education itself pays some attention to the emotional and feeling side of life, it is leaving neglected an element which has no little to do with national stability and sanity, since these can only be grounded upon the manifestation of spirit in love and service.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT

“Conventions mean very little to the artist, because conventionality arises either from mental laziness or fear of what others will say and think. Moreover the true genius must ever have the capacity to feel deeper love and emotions than the man in the street”

*Eaglefield Hull*

We frequently hear the “artistic temperament” referred to in ordinary conversation as if it were some kind of a vice, a mental aberration or a disease: and it is certainly doubtful whether those who so casually discuss the subject have any clear idea as to what constitutes this particular equipment. That no great work of artistic merit can be accomplished in its absence is more or less tacitly agreed, but it may be interesting to consider in what this essential basis of artistic success consists.

We have before pointed out that the function of an interpreter is to act as a link between the spiritual and the material: he is the prophet to reveal the otherwise hidden message. The interpreter is the artist, and the artist is the interpreter. The ability to come into contact with the finer things, tangible or intangible, is simply a capacity of response finer than normal. A trained sense-perception is more acute than a non-trained: and quite apart from training there are very wide divergences in the innate range of activity of the various senses. Again, keen interest and attention tend to make a particular sense more alert, and even to extend the boundaries of its response. A man who is particularly interested in some maiden’s voice or footstep will be able to make correct distinctions which simply do not exist for anyone less actively interested in that particular lady. Concentration enables any sense to become more acute. This increased acuteness naturally gives its possessor the power to receive impressions which would otherwise escape record. In the sense of not being usual, this acute sensitiveness of the artist is thus an abnormality: but it is only a variation in the direction of progress, for the whole story of the evolutionary climb up life’s ladder is one of ever-increasing sensibility and response. The artistic temperament is thus, in essence, a phase of evolution somewhat in advance of its day.

Any departure from the normal, even though it be in the forward direction and carrying with it certain privileges, yet entails its disadvantages. The man who breaks out is generally made to pay pretty dearly for his temerity: but, if there were none to advance and thus break out, civilisation itself would stagnate and there could be no progress. The artist, the dreamer, the visionary, the poet, the genius, these all are the advance guard of humanity. As such they frequently receive the pioneers' scanty reward, but their eyes are scarcely fixed upon mundane munificence, already their scale of values is a spiritual one. But it is just these delicate, sensitive folk, susceptible to the gossamer impulses that would never even ruffle the surface of the average man's mind, who are open to the urge of spirit and responsive to its "drive." So they answer to the helm and steer out into the unknown, while the more sleek, comfortable, and well-fed do not so much as guess that there has been any impulse at all. "H'm," say the corpulent, "why can't they leave well alone and be comfortable?" But it is no part of the great plan that the wheels of progress should ever slow down, it is much more to the point that they should be made to turn more quickly. Spirit is the force behind evolution, the force that makes the acorn unfold into the oak, and it is the urge of spirit which compels man to unfold his own divinity.

The artistic temperament, then, is the super-sensitive, and by this very virtue it creates its own difficulties. The artist is too responsive, too widely responsive unless he knows how to safeguard himself. Nature herself in her thousand moods plays upon the sensitive mind: she moulds it with her beauties, leads it out into the open with the call of the wild, or terrifies it with the grandeur of her anger. The artist replies to the appeal of beauty, but is seared with the degradation of ugliness or the sordid. He is thrilled with love, and wounded to the core by hatred. He responds to praise, but is depressed by sneers to a degree which the ordinary man is unable to comprehend. Thus his daily life is pierced with a thousand exquisite emotions to which your well-fed plebeian is stranger indeed. He lives on more exalted heights and yet sinks to inconceivably greater depths. Life truly consists more in our wealth of impression than in the length of our days, and therefore the artist lives at greater intensity, and consequently with a greater nervous wear and tear.

This sensitiveness is more easily moved to tears, since it is in essence more feminine than masculine, being more a matter of the heart than the head: but because of this element of the feminine it partakes more of the magnetic temperament than the electric. It

possesses to a greater degree the capacity for holding on. Thus the sensitive artist, for the sake of his ideal, will peg away at the forlorn hope, and, sustained by the spirit, may bring off the thousand-to-one chance. He has the capacity to endure to the end, while the man without this “drive” will weigh things up, eventually playing for safety and, incidentally, comfort. Our friend of the artistic temperament will be acutely sympathetic, and thus an easy prey for the importunate: he may even give everything away and so have nothing for himself. The world will furnish him with countless opportunities both of great joy and bitter grief, so the readings of the temperament-chart of the artist will be apt to resemble the variations of a barometer when changeable weather is about. Genius is thus as a rule variable to the verge of the irrational.

Erratic as it may seem to the ordinary person, the vision of the artist is often inherently near the truth. His sensitiveness enables him to see this “more of truth,” even if it becloud his vision occasionally with mundane perversions. He possesses his own standards, and when these conflict with the conventional it is convention that must be sacrificed. Thus the conventional mind brands the artistic temperament as immoral. But morality is not absolute, it is conventional and relative: we do not, as once, punish the sheep-stealer with the gallows nor the heretic with red-hot irons, for our standards have changed with the years. So also do they vary with our locality: what is right in this place is wrong over the border. The vision of the artist sees beyond the formularies to the substance, and so he is prepared to brave criticism for his stand upon what he knows to be true.

Love and beauty call to him with other meaning than they bear to the prosaic and self-satisfied, and so he answers to the call of affection when perhaps it would have been better for his peace of mind that caution and prudence should have held sway. But again it is an open question whether the man who follows the gleam, with inspiration to beckon him, does not come nearer to the truth than the man of calculating caution who sums up and weighs. Sometimes crabbed age awakes to the realisation that the cocksure aim of youth is on occasion nearer to the mark than the aim directed by cold intellect, plotted out on a diagram, and worked out correct to three places of decimals. It is perfectly possible for the cautious and orthodox pedestrian to spend so much time and effort in dodging the dangers of life’s path, and in endeavouring to keep off the grass, that he makes no solid progress. On the other hand, the artistic

temperament lives in the world and is not entitled to follow its own laws where those conflict with the interests of others. The mere possession of this type of temperament involves its Bohemian owner in many difficulties which do not beset the path of those who fit into the routine of life as they find it. Certainly it is advisable for the artist to temper his ways with discretion, for genius is altogether too apt to make a meteoric blaze and end up in a fizzle.

The possessor of the artistic temperament is frequently deemed unreliable and capricious, and to a certain extent this is true. It is the sensitiveness first to one impact and then another, the susceptibility to the manifold forces that play upon the individual, which turn him now in the one direction and then in the other. He is lured and led by this, and then by that. Yet at times he is capable of the greatest concentration: immersed in his subject he may even forget the outer world and omit to eat his dinner, or perhaps like the philosopher he may eat it twice.

It is, however, quite possible to cultivate some of the advantages of this temperament and to restrict the disadvantages. It is not necessary, for example, that anyone should be at the mercy of every transient impulse: this involves an enormous waste of energy, as would the voyage of a ship which should suffer itself to be blown hither and thither by every passing breeze. We only respond to that to which we are mentally attuned, and our minds pick up out of the welter of errant thought only those which correspond to the note we sing. This, then, suggests that by attuning the mind to certain things we automatically throw it out of tune with conflicting ideas. The successful artist, as a rule, is one who has learnt to render himself oblivious to distractions, and so is enabled to concentrate his attention solely on the work in hand. The artist who will be permanently unsuccessful is the one whose enthusiasms attract him first to one thing and then another, never allowing him to remain absorbed by the one thing long enough to bring it to a satisfactory issue. Auto-suggestion applied to this point of inculcating response to certain things, and immunity from the influence of others, is an easy and extremely practical help.

One characteristic of genius is an extreme fertility in making mental associations. A central object comes into mind, and immediately the mind of the genius, by contrast, comparison, analogy, inference, and imagination, weaves around it a wealth of possibility: the dull-witted man sees the same, but his mind travels no farther than the actual

vision. The quick mind supplies the apt repartee, while the dullard thinks of the appropriate reply next morning—if at all. The disadvantage of the latter mind is that it does not work easily, the danger of the former is that it may work too easily and get out of control. Where the central control does not suffice to keep a strong hand upon this easy-running mental machinery, it may quickly merge into eccentricity and possibly into madness. The insane show this same tendency to rapid, but irrelevant, association which lands them in incoherency: they make, or indulge in, associations which no normal person would allow. A genius is only a genius while the necessary selection and control over these associations is retained, when this is lost the genius passes into that insanity to which it is so closely associated. The same conditions and remarks apply to the artistic temperament, which itself is a mark of possible genius.

The artistic impulse is essentially creative, and in this it demonstrates its relationship to the question of sex. It is well recognised that many of the inspirations of genius in the various forms of Art have come at a time when the artist was in the throes of the gentle passion. This “love neurosis,” as the cold specialist dubs it, is in essence a condition of exaltation, and therefore of exceptional sensitiveness. Need we wonder, then, that our artist-friend makes perhaps more frequent excursions than the humdrum individual into the realms of amorous exuberance? By nature he is more susceptible to the influence of the finer emotions, and he will find a thousand graces in the curve of an arm or the turn of an ankle, where, were you to appraise such in cold blood, there might be after all little enough to rave about.

It seems probable that the inspiration of the opposite sex in the artistic direction lies more in this mood of exaltation than in any specific influence. In the exalted condition there is the greater capacity of response to inspiration from outside ourselves, and also from within. Under all circumstances we are being played upon by the waves of the sea of thoughts in which we daily live, and therefore inspiration from this outside source is somewhat of a commonplace. But under certain conditions one can undoubtedly be inspired by one's own greater (subconscious) mind, which contains as treasure all the lore of its own experience, and probably a good deal more beside.

However, the artistic temperament, with all that may be said for or against it, is a gift of the high gods, and while it does not of necessity imply a greater degree of spirituality and spiritual impulse than the

normal, it does at any rate make this possible. The conditions are provided for finer work than is open to the majority, but so long as man has a measure of free will he is able to turn the use of his gifts upward or down. The freedom of the artist may of course degenerate into license, and the spiritual impulse may be turned to perverted ends. There is a distinct difference between the truly spiritual and what may be termed the psychic: there are hidden powers and latent possibilities which the specially sensitive are beginning to unfold. But the danger is exactly on a par with that which up-to-date chemists and scientists foresee in the physical world. There are tons of energy, we are told, locked up in the atom of the physical world, and the scientist prays that mankind may not find the secret of unlocking that power until his moral sense is developed to such a degree as to prevent his using it for destructive ends. It is comparatively easy to stimulate the psychic side of our natures, but unless these powers be tuned by an accompanying spirituality to a high note, unexpected and even undesirable results may follow. The artist has taken a step forward in the exploration of a new realm, and new discoveries—even though he does not fully comprehend their import—are falling to his lot. The safeguard of the pioneer lies in his recognition of the spiritual nature of his quest: if he realises that he is making contact with a new realm of thought and idea, then he will rate his calling high, and not run unnecessary risk by pursuing it in any unworthy or selfish aim.

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## CHAPTER XI

“PURE MUSIC”

“We understand but little of music. The greatest masterpiece is but a signpost to that infinite realm of harmony, in which music is for ever included, and to the joy which awaits in its eternal unfoldment”

*F. L. Rawson*

The point has been raised in discussion—“Is there such a thing as pure music?” The question involved is whether music must necessarily convey any emotional message, or whether it may just be a concourse of sweet sounds signifying nothing. There are those who are prepared to lend support to the proposition on either side: but, inasmuch as the whole object of these pages has been to emphasise the spiritual message of music, our viewpoint would naturally lead us to take up a position in conflict with that of the “pure music” school.

The difficulty in all discussion, and particularly in such as this, consists in the fact of our own individual uniqueness. Little as we may realise it, our standards of judgment and criticism are purely individual and infinitely variable. Two people see a thing: put scientifically, the result of this is that each experiences a stimulation of the optic nerve. Apart from any differences arising from the varying powers of concentration and observation, the stimulus will be the same. But the next step in the process of seeing is the translation of this nerve-stimulus by the brain into a visual image: this can only be done by the awakening of a brain-picture which is already there—in short, by recognition. As the pictures already existing in the mind are compiled by the experience of the individual, and as no two sets of experiences can possibly be identical in all respects, it follows that the visual image awakened is a purely personal and unique one. The thing seen is variable according to the individual. It is impossible for us to observe alike even when we are concerned with concrete objects: still more is it impossible when we deal with abstract subjects such as Art and Beauty. Hence arises the fundamental difficulty of discussion.

In the world of affairs we have arrived at certain understandings or conventional views which we generally accept, and upon this basis we proceed to argue as if our facts were facts—which which they are not. We agree to regard a certain “colour” as red, although as a matter of fact it is neither a



colour, nor is it red. Colour is merely the reflection of certain light rays transmitted by ether waves: our red object reflects the red rays of the spectrum, having absorbed all the others. But in the absence of light our object is no longer red, and colour does not exist. Had we generally agreed to call this colour blue, then it would be blue instead of red. The basis of any argument about colour must be some sort of convention of this kind to form a common meeting ground. The difficulty in discussion about music is that such a conventional basis of agreement does not exist.

Music may thus convey a message to one person and not to another: it may be “pure music” carrying no emotion to this man, and yet it may convey something peculiarly definite, to the mind of the other. The message is not a thing of which we can logically argue “either it is, or it is not”: both statements may be true. Sound exists in the form of vibration, but if I am deaf I cannot hear it: it has no existence—FOR ME. The problem thus centres itself largely in the mind of the individual rather than in the question whether there is or is not a message and a meaning. Not only music, but the whole world is brimming over with messages and meanings which our dull senses cannot appreciate. The folk who populate this globe are largely dead. They answer to such a limited range of interests and sensations that they cannot in any real sense be said to be “alive.”

The message of music may be a very gossamer thing, it may be far too tenuous to be expressed in words, though possibly it might be conveyed eloquently enough in some of the sister Arts, in dancing, posture, gesture, or in facial expression. “Pour not out words where there is a musician,” says the writer in Ecclesiasticus. The message may scarcely be a thought, or emotion, or even an idea: it may simply be a mood. Words so often become our masters instead of our servants, and we are apt to think that if a thing cannot be reduced to a verbal formula it is an airy nothing, a figment of the imagination. So it may be, but it is none the less real. We have thought of ourselves as material individuals for so long that it is difficult for us to use other than material standards in our estimate of immaterial things: hence our confusion. We can feel a thousand things far too delicate to explain or express, joys too exquisite to voice, doubts too

tenuous to utter, and griefs too heavy to be borne: we could not put them on paper, nor submit to be cross-examined as to their reality and substance, but there they are, and not all the argument in the world could impugn their reality to us. What is the most emotional of all the Arts? Music. No art has a deeper power of penetration, no other can render shades of feeling so delicate.”<sup>[22]</sup>

Let us take a concrete example: the change from the major to the minor mode carries with it a change of sentiment. We feel that, quite noticeably, the minor mood is one of sadness and resignation as compared with the major of brightness and activity. It may be advanced that this is merely a matter of association in the mind, that we have been long accustomed to relate grief and melancholy and sadness with minor keys, and that therefore the one idea very naturally brings up the other. The argument is logical, and cannot be summarily dismissed. But when we reflect that this contrast of activity and resignation, as typified by the major and minor modes, also corresponds to the fundamental relation of the sexes, the active and the receptive, the “doing” and “being,” we may question whether association is sufficient as an explanation. The major and minor modes may thus be themselves but expressions of some deeper spiritual relationship embodied in the nature of things.

Without giving rise to any definite emotion, and in the absence of any specific programme, it is thus quite possible for music to suggest a mood or to induce an atmosphere. Surely this is, in effect, the conveyance of a message and a meaning, even though both be inarticulate. Such influences may call to like moods or atmospheres within ourselves and bring them into expression: by being made thus explicit instead of remaining latent they gain added strength, and are recorded in ourselves by memory. Thus even the mood suggested by the music of the moment may be a lasting item in our soul’s growth. Art in all its variety of noble forms is ever beckoning to the best in us, to the sense of the beautiful and to the unformulated ideal: it is the spirit clothed in form calling to the spirit not yet expressed, bidding it build beauty. “This building of man’s true world—the living world of truth and beauty—is the function of Art. Man is true, where he feels his infinity, where he is divine, and the divine is the creator in him. Therefore with the attainment of his truth he creates.”<sup>[23]</sup>

This call to spirit is the old allegory of the sleeping beauty waiting to be awakened to her royal rank by the kiss of the seeking prince: it is the same truth as expressed in the Bible —“We love Him because He first loved us.”

It is not music alone that thus seeks to arouse our latent divinity and to stimulate the tenuous virtues which expression alone can make robust. When rhythm without calls to the rhythm within, it answers because it must. “Dancing is symbolical, it means something, it expresses a feeling, a state of mind.”<sup>[24]</sup> The grace of the dancer may very well stir something in mind that ordinarily receives but little awakening. With the changes in the rhythm of the dance, and the gestures that vary in consonance, the echo within sings to a new tune. Perhaps we find ourselves tapping the rhythm with our feet or our fingers, or it may be that we find the very expression on our own face is altering to match that upon the countenance of the dancer. The skilful speaker also can arouse almost any emotion he pleases in the minds of his audience. He may one moment have them laughing, and then the next, as if by magic touch, he may bring them to sober mood or even to sorrow. Music no less surely does the same through the agency of rhythm, melody, and harmonic texture. There may be no words in the music or the dance, but the emotion is nevertheless conveyed. Moreover, each idea in mind has its own associations, and when once the central idea is implanted it forthwith proceeds to clothe itself in these associations, decking itself out according to the native colour of the mind.

We find it impossible to conceive that anything which may be termed music is devoid of significance, though there are certainly gradations and degrees of import. It may well be that music, like so many other things in nature, has a three-fold aspect corresponding to our own make-up as body, soul, and spirit. The outer form, the composition and actual structure, represents the “body” of music: that part which is visible even to the unobservant eye and audible to the indiscriminating ear. This is a matter of notes and tones quite apart from any real meaning or value. Such would be an academic exercise, or a technically correct but unconvincing ballad. It might possibly make some appeal to the intellect by virtue of the “exhibition of balance and symmetry, the definiteness of plan and design, the vitality

and proportion of organic growth,”<sup>[25]</sup> but this would not suffice to place it in the category of music displaying the “soul” element.

This second and higher “soul” significance shows itself in the emotional appeal of the music, in the feelings it provokes and the mood it engenders. Here sound speaks in parables with an outer story and an inner meaning. The non-musical person hears sounds, but the musical mind hears sense. Whether the tidings be of sweetness, affection, or delight, of strength, vigour, or energy, of sorrow or regret, there is all the difference in the world between the outward comprehension and the inner interpretation. The formal part of the music is the frame, but the emotion supplies the picture within.

Yet this is not all. There is still the significance which the picture is intended to convey, the spirit, the very heart of it. This constitutes the inspiration and “if this inner reality (Spirit) does not exist in a work it ceases to be a work of art at all: it becomes an example of beautiful handiwork—fine craftsmanship, perhaps—but not art.”<sup>[26]</sup>

It is only in the spirit that the real meaning of true music is to be found, minor and partial revelations may be met and enjoyed at the lower stages, and at their level these may satisfy the aspirations of those who cannot take the higher seats at the musical feast. It is impossible that this spiritual message should be comprehended except by those who have in some measure unfolded their own spiritual perceptions. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. The Bible has its literal and verbal message, appropriate in degree to those whose intellectual accomplishment rises no further than an ordinary story: but there is an inner meaning which the more advanced can appreciate. There is yet an esoteric meaning, a holy of holies, into which only the initiated and instructed can penetrate, and this only those whose spiritual vision is unfolded can discern. “Only those in whom the spirit is evolved can understand the spiritual meaning.”<sup>[27]</sup> But each stage has its gospel, though that of the higher stages is incomprehensible to those in the lower. So in all true music there are meanings within meanings, and nothing is meaningless. “Pure” music perhaps conveys the innermost

meaning of all, for “shades of colour, like shades of sound, are of a much subtler nature, (and) cause much subtler vibrations of the spirit than can ever be given by words.”<sup>[28]</sup>

In this three-fold aspect of music, then, we may perhaps find the key as to whether music must necessarily imply anything or not. There are the outer courts of the Temple of Art, where the meaning and expression is adapted to those who may foregather only there, but there are the inner courts where “more of truth” is to be found by those who have ears to hear. But in the inmost chamber we may discern in the greatest masterpieces in music that “something beside, some divine element of life by which they are animated and inspired.”<sup>[29]</sup> All true music has true meaning, but this must correspond at each stage with the power and grade of discrimination and appraisal possible for the individual. We are wise in our generation if we refrain from disparaging what we do not understand; it is easy to reflect upon ourselves in such disparagement. Conversely, if there be no meaning, surely there is no music, and we need waste no time in endeavouring to find a message and a meaning in that composition wherein the composer himself could find none to put.

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## CHAPTER XII

### THE PURPOSE OF ART

“But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear: The  
rest may reason and welcome: ‘tis we musicians know”

*Browning*

There are in essence but two creeds in the world, the one a materialistic belief, and the other some degree or phase of a spiritual conception. Every degree of density is to be found in the material view, and every grade of refinement exists in the spiritual vision: by imperceptible gradations they may shade from one into the other, but the two extremes are material and spiritual. The latter view will tend to result in unselfishness, in altruism and a keen desire to leave one's own little corner of the world better for having lived in it. The material idea must almost of necessity lead up to a selfish course of conduct, where the personal interests are put foremost, and the sole object is to “get” as much as possible, as opposed to the spiritual philosophy which would advocate “giving.”

The old wise-heads who carved “MAN—KNOW THYSELF” over the entrance to the Temple at Delphi knew what they were talking about, for it is largely owing to the fact that man knows so little of himself—and generally knows that little wrong—that his philosophy has taken such a perverted turn. The world, and more especially our western world, is hopelessly material in its outlook, and we would suggest that it is because the average man thinks of himself as his material body that his philosophy follows along the same lines. When a man identifies himself with his body, and has only a pious hope of having a spirit which will come into action when he dies, or perhaps a very long time after he is dead, then naturally his chief concern is with the body of which, at any rate, he has definite assurance. So he looks after the body, seeks comfort and luxury for it, and strives for the necessary money with which to gratify its whims. This means that he must get money the best way he can, but he must get it: if it has to be at the expense of others—well, so much the worse

for them. If it has to be fought for, then naturally the stronger wins: the “survival of the fittest” he will say. Thus, quite logically, from the primary misconception a superstructure of error is raised. As each body has diverse whims, the pursuit of these must lead to the widest range and conflict of aims, and thus materialism results in disorder, cross-purposes and confusion. On all sides this diversity of aim, with its corresponding confusion, is visible both in individuals and in nations to-day.

But as soon as a man realises that he is primarily a spirit, having a body as an instrument through which to play, his point of view is entirely altered. The pursuit of mere physical enjoyment and luxury is recognised as having an enervating and blunting effect upon the finer spiritual faculties: it puts the instrument out of tune and spoils its tone. Money is seen as somewhat of a snare and a delusion, when valued for its own sake. The object of life is recognised as spiritual growth, and in that growth happiness is found. Quite notoriously it is sought in vain in mere selfish pursuits. This spiritual growth can only be attained by the practice of the law of love, manifesting itself in unselfish service in the interests of others. The effect of this spiritual conception is to eliminate diversity of aim, and to lead back to the simplicity and unity of a single purpose—that of spiritual evolution.

The body, we know, has come up the long ladder of evolution, and it still retains in its build many traces of the climb. There are muddy patches in the instincts and passions, and encumbrances and impedimenta in both mind and body, as part of our heritage. But spirit has come DOWN. As Wordsworth expresses it —“trailing clouds of glory do we come from God.” All religions claim for us an immortality, and it is difficult for us to conceive an existence finite at one end and infinite at the other: so if we are to claim our immortality of spirit we should surely recognise our present spirituality which ensures that immortality. However this may be, we may at any rate agree that body comes UP and spirit comes DOWN, and they consort here together for a few decades: then the body undoubtedly returns as dust to dust, and “the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes). But there would be no evolution and no fulfilment of purpose if the spirit were not to return a richer and more developed spirit by reason

of its sojourn in the flesh: there would be stagnation, just a simple ineffectual turning round and round, as of a screw that had stripped its thread.

The battle royal is the fight for mastery as between body and spirit: evolution proceeds apace when spirit takes command and bids the body minister to its progress, but evolution halts when the body clogs the spirit. Then Nature, our taskmaster, punishes us, ever choosing that way which is entirely appropriate and induced by the fault itself: this is the purpose and the cause of our pecks of trouble. The battle has to be fought—and won—by each of us: the only effect of temporary surrender is indefinite delay. The battle has still to be fought again with added difficulties later on. “The popular-class composer nowadays is not infrequently a thoroughly competent and well-read musician who, *if he chose*, could write really solid and substantial music.”<sup>[30]</sup> So the frankly commercial musician who writes for the market has surrendered in one skirmish of spirit. Very possibly he gains the desired pieces of silver, but they are dearly paid for at the expense of his own artistic soul. Also in the long run the surrender is futile, for he **MUST** evolve: and if he has slipped down, then so much further has he again to climb.

The antagonist of Materialism in the world-contest is Spirit, and the organising and marshalling of the spiritual forces has been the province of religion in general. But religion has itself been too much apart from the things of everyday, it has lived in a compartment of its own, labelled “Sundays only.” As a consequence its influence has failed to permeate the world of affairs, and both religion and the world have suffered direly as a result. When religion ceases to carry any weight with the individual, his balance necessarily sways toward the material: and when religious teaching practically ceases to have any vitality in the education of the nation, it follows that the outlook must turn more and more in the direction of selfishness, force, and mere worldly affluence. This may be a tolerably comfortable method of extinction, but it is no way of progressive life. Music allies itself with the forces at work on the spiritual side, and thus comes to the battle in support of religion.



Music exists as a permanent witness to the reality of the intangible, and to the power and pre-eminence of qualities which no money can purchase and which Time is powerless to destroy. The so-called solid things disintegrate, the vogue of one year spells oblivion in the next, but the power of music to stir the pulse, to awaken the emotions and to uplift the spirit, has remained through all the yesterdays, and will do so—we may anticipate—through all the to-morrows. It is an ally and co-witness with religion for immaterial and spiritual ends. Another ally, in the guise of science, is also coming fast in support. Science has already overstepped the bounds of the material in many quarters: its trend is ever in the direction of the invisible, where there is another range of values and qualities, and where no scales weigh and no footrules measure. It is now engaged in discovering the unseen causes which underlie the objective effects we notice in the physical world. Presently, there can be but little doubt, we shall find the three, Religion, Science, and Music (or rather, Art in general) ranged side by side for the ultimate destruction of the purely material and mechanistic theories of life: and when these are finally overthrown, with them will also topple the doctrines, founded thereon, of self-seeking and strife.

Our own spirit-nature is our truest guide to the discernment of the spirit universal. There is but one life and one spirit, though the degrees of its manifestation are wide as the poles asunder: just as in our own body there are specialised cells for high tasks and for lowly, yet the same life pervades them all. There is a wild robin redbreast who always comes when I dig my garden, to eat the grubs that the spade turns up. He is not in the least afraid, and he often answers when I whistle to him: he is a little cousin of mine. His life is in no essentials different to my own life, except that I have the advantage of him in being able to express so much more of the same spirit. Divinity and spirit (are not the terms synonymous?) are in all, behind all, and in ever-increasing degree before all. Our own answering to love and the appeal of beauty is simply the echo of like to like; the spirit within replies to the call of spirit without. For this reason Music is a universal language, and Art can know no boundaries.

To explore the beauties of Art and Music is to add those beauties, by expression and the power of memory, to the self. Thus we may grow more beautiful, just as surely as by thinking ever in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence, we grow more sordid and mercenary. It is a perfectly commonsense process. Furthermore, the appreciation of beauty and of artistic expression develops our power of keener appreciation. Evolution in music cannot stop, for spirit is behind it: and the spirit within must eventually find its way back to the universal source from which it came, just as water must find its own level. The present status of everything that we observe to-day is purely temporary: we are looking at one picture of a cosmic cinema film that stretches on to infinity. Just because we see only one static picture of a process which truly never stops moving, so we get a view of life that contains much of delusion. We have heard a Doctor of Music state in public his opinion that the age of the composition of musical masterpieces was for ever passed: so will others say that the age of inspiration and prophecy has also departed. These good people are mistaking the outer form which is transient, for the inner principle which is spirit and eternal. They have lost their bearings. Music must go on from development to development, and just as soon as it proves itself incapable of further development and expression along certain lines, the spirit within will rend the husk that can no longer contain it and will blossom forth in some new and more expansive guise. As with our own bodies, the outworn garb will be laid aside, and the spirit will find a finer form.

“Like Scriabin, Scott looks to Music as a means to carry further the spiritual evolution of the race, and believes that it has occult properties of which only a few enlightened people are aware.”<sup>[31]</sup> There can be no doubt that this survival-value of Music lies in its power to assist spiritual unfoldment and progress, and if the serious practice of music involves a certain discipline of plain living and high thinking, are not these themselves adjuncts to a progressive evolution? Where the adequate interpretation of music involves a certain abnegation and unselfishness in the case of a soloist, and a large measure of team-play and co-operation in the case of concerted work, are not these again elements in inculcating an attitude that transcends self? Does not the simple

appreciation of music tend to unlock the doors of imagination and set it free in regions far removed from the gross? And are not all these so many aids to higher ends?

If the inspiration that is in music and works through it serves to awaken us to the fact that the world of spirit is very close at all times, and that our knowledge of it and our communion therewith is solely limited by our capacity of fine response, it will have done something of incalculable value. If it arouses in us the desire to fit ourselves by aspiration and a high resolve to achieve that delicacy of sensitiveness whereby we ourselves may catch some of the spirit's tenuous message, it will have served to put us in touch with eternal influences. It should certainly assist in breaking down any leanings towards a gospel of materialism with all its naked selfishness, and in so doing "Art is calling us the 'children of the immortal,' and proclaiming our right to dwell in the heavenly worlds."<sup>[32]</sup>

## FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Macpherson. "Music and its Appreciation."
- [2] "Everyman and his Music." Scholes.
- [3] Newlandsmith. "The Temple of Art."
- [4] Balzac.
- [5] James Rhoades.
- [6] J. C. Hadden, "Modern Musicians."
- [7] Dowling. "The Aquarian Gospel."
- [8] Jung. "Analytical Psychology."
- [9] C. J. Whitby, M.D. "The Open Secret."
- [10] Wordsworth.
- [11] Newlandsmith. "The Temple of Art."
- [12] Lancelot, in the "Referee."
- [13] Leigh Henry. "Music."
- [14] Sir Henry Hadow.
- [15] Sir Henry Hadow.
- [16] Canon J. H. Masterman.
- [17] Ernest Hunt. "The Hidden Self."
- [18] Kirkham Davis. "Where dwells the Soul Serene."
- [19] Kirkham Davis, "Where dwells the Soul Serene."

- [20] W. R. Inge.
- [21] Percy Scholes. "Everyman and his Music."
- [22] Ribot. "Psychology of the Emotions."
- [23] Rabindranath Tagore. "What is Art?"
- [24] Ribot. "Psychology of the Emotions."
- [25] Hadow. "Studies in Modern Music."
- [26] Newlandsmith. "The Temple of Art."
- [27] Besant. "Esoteric Christianity."
- [28] Kandinsky, quoted in "Eurythmics." (Dalcroze.)
- [29] Hadow. "Studies in Modern Music."
- [30] Article in "John o' London's Weekly."
- [31] Eaglefield Hull. "Cyril Scott."
- [32] Rabindranath Tagore. "Personality."

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